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THE

NUN OF MISERECORDIA.

A ROMANCE.

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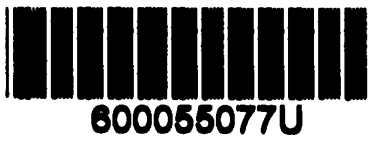
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THE

NUN OF MISERECORDIA;

OR,

THE EVE OF ALL SAINTS.

A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY SOPHIA FRANCES,

AUTHOR OF VIVONIO, CONSTANCE DE LINDENSDORF, &c.

Nor sleep, nor sanctuary,
* * * * * * * * * * *
The prayers of priests, nor times of sacrifice,
————shall lift up
Their privilege and custom 'gainst my hate.
SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Minerva-Press,
FOR LANE, NEWMAN, AND CO.
LEADENHALL-STREET.
1807.

249. s. 465.

THE

NUN OF MISERECORDIA.

CHAP. I.

"OH tell me, holy father," cried the lovely Adelaide, the moment she entered the anti-room, "oh tell me, when shall I again behold him?"

"Suppress this tumultuous anxiety, my daughter," said the friar, meekly; "my time to remain with you is limited to an hour of confession. Alas! this short hour cannot be thus piously employed. You are not in a fit state for the performance of such a sacred duty. We must now, there-

fore, think of some means for restoring your peace of mind, and then I trust you will evince your gratitude to Heaven, by the fervour of your religion. To obtain this interview, I have been compelled to give a seeming assent to villainy; but, as I had no other means of frustrating the plans now forming against you, I was obliged to catch at the certainly too reprehensible alternative of dissimulation. Your recovery is known to the Marquis, and your union is appointed to take place the day after to-morrow. I have declined performing the sacred rites, but have promised to provide a brother who will. Thus I am secure of the Marquis's confidence. In the mean time, you will escape with your lover, who is now free from his chains; but you will have nearly half a day's journey through the vaults and subterranean passages beneath the castle; and therefore we must take care to provide you with a guide, lest your own fears, and the weakness of the Count, should prove the means of disappointment and discovery. At the hour of eleven to-

morrow

morrow night, you must depart. The subterranean passage terminates amid a clump of trees, which overhang the high rocks within a league of the castle, and near the road leading to Chambery—for you had better proceed into Savoy for awhile; there you will find a small covered cart in waiting, at the termination of the cave, in which you must make the best of your way to Chambery, and there you can find———."

Adelaide here timidly, but with impatience, interrupted the friar, to inform him of the proposal of the Villettes. The good father looked aghast, and demanded a full relation.

Adelaide repeated every particular.

"I do not credit the sincerity of this proposal," said the friar, after a meditative pause.—"It is nevertheless certain, that Madame de Beauvais is extremely terrified by the mysterious events which occur in the castle; but there appears so much improbability of her having even any pretended friendship for that despicable Vil-

lette, that I cannot but suspect that she is deceiving you, only to prevent your taking any more certain methods to escape.—As to all that she has averred concerning your real name and rank, I would advise you by no means to let that influence you, as there is still a mystery attending that affair, the developement of which might make you most bitterly repent having formed engagements which you could perhaps not be able to fulfil."

"Be more explicit, father, I conjure you," cried Adelaide; "are there any doubts for me to harbour? am I related to the Marquis?"

"Importune me not thus, my daughter," said the friar, in rather a severe tone; "the present is not an hour for explanations, but of consideration. All that you wish to know cannot now be unfolded.—Suffice it, that I warn you to beware of those people."

"I will break with them instantly," exclaimed Adelaide.

"Not

"Not so," said the friar; "are you not aware, that to deny their offers of assistance would be to tacitly avow that you had hopes of help from some other quarter?—No, you must deal cautiously; affect to listen—start trifling objections, yet seem to yield, and, if possible, delay your fixed answer; yet avoid, above all things, the exciting their suspicions."

"Oh, father, what a task! I fear I am not so schooled in dissimulation as to succeed in this," replied Adelaide.

"To-night," said the friar, "you shall again be conducted to the Count's prison; and surely the idea of his sufferings will impress on your mind the indispensible necessity of caution."

"Ah, father!" exclaimed Adelaide, "you have indeed presented a motive which will animate me to every exertion.—Oh, how bitterly was I disappointed last night! Say, what is this horrible vision which disturbs the castle?"

The friar started; a death-like paleness

passed over his cheek, and he murmured—"Unfortunate Adelaide! why do you torture me thus? Alas! you will learn full soon the terrible mystery which now hangs over your head. The late Marchioness, ere she died ——."

A slight tap at the anti-room door interrupted the friar, who, pausing suddenly, seemed to be overwhelmed with confusion and fear.

Adelaide demanded who was there? no voice replied; but the rap was repeated; and the father Bertrand, with trembling hand, opened the door.

It was the Marquis.—Pale, agitated, and confused, he advanced towards the recoiling Adelaide, and throwing himself at her feet, entreated her to listen to him.

"The Marquis St. Viviers can have nothing to say to me which I will listen to," said Adelaide, haughtily, and endeavouring to retreat.

The Marquis held her hands fast clasped in his, and turning towards the friar, said—"Your

"Your hour is finished, Father Bertrand; but I do not perceive that your influence has been exerted to forward my happiness."

"If Mademoiselle de Monterci does not receive my Lord Marquis with more gentleness than usual, she will ill fulfil my wishes, my Lord," replied the friar, bowing his head with an humble adulative air to the Marquis.

Fortunately Adelaide understood the seeming evasion of the father, and, apparently awed by his command, did not again attempt to quit her chair; yet she could not compel herself to treat the Marquis with much gentleness, although she constrained herself to sit and listen to a long speech he made, professing for her the most unbounded love and admiration.

At length he presented her with a valuable casket of rich and costly jewels. Adelaide gently pushed them aside. He took out a pair of pearl bracelets, ornamented with beautiful miniatures, splendidly set—the one a portrait of himself, and the other

of a very lovely woman, whose style of dress proclaimed her not of the then present day.

Adelaide glanced her eyes over them, and, seized with an involuntary impulse, said—

"This, I presume, is the portrait of Madame Durancy?"

The bracelets fell from the hand of the Marquis, and he sat horror-struck; while the friar uttered a cry like shrieks of the deepest woe, and exclaiming—"Oh, unfeeling Adelaide!" fled from the room with the utmost precipitation.

Adelaide remained as thunderstruck, incapable of conjecturing why her words had produced so horrible an effect on the Father Bertrand, and unable to articulate a word; while the Marquis, with fixed eyes, and trembling hands, stooped to pick up the fragments of the portraits, and sighing, in a deep and hollow voice, said—

"Oh, my mother, thy likeness has occasioned thy miserable son the keenest pang which

which guilt can suffer.—Cruel, unfeeling girl," he added, wildly gazing on the dismayed Adelaide, "you have now ensured to yourself my never-ceasing displeasure;" and he rushed out of the room, leaving the jewels scattered about the floor; while Adelaide sat gazing after him, with a look of wild amazement and terror.

At length, after slowly recovering from the shock she had thus received, she stole back to her chamber, and yielded to all the torturing emotions of the fear and distrust that had seized her mind; for the horror-struck cry of the friar seemed to imply some guilty knowledge of the Durancys fate; and Adelaide, as she reflected on this circumstance, felt all the misery of being compelled to doubt the only being who had offered to save her and her lover from impending ruin.

In the midst of her distress and perplexity, she, however, recollected that the history of the Father Bertrand was in her own possession; and, with all the avidity

of eager desire, to learn whether he was worthy of her confidence, she closed her chamber door, and took out the little packet, containing the history of the friar.

CHAP. II.

ON opening the first page, a small billet fell from between the leaves. She took it up, and, on opening it, found that it contained but a few lines, and was addressed to herself by Bertrand. They were as follow:—

"In entrusting you, Mademoiselle, with the memoir of my life, a memoir written only

only for the perusal of the Abbot of my convent, after my decease, I evince at once the sincerity of my wishes to serve you, and my perfect reliance on your honour and discretion; for, should you ever breathe the remotest hint of my story to any human being, except the Count St. Croix, inevitable ruin must ensue to me. On perusing this tale of horrors, you will clearly perceive wherefore I cannot tak an open part in the affairs of yourself and the Count. But oh! when you read and recoil in horror from the detail of my crimes, and the misfortunes of your father, lift up your eyes to Heaven, and pray for power to forgive the wretched.

"BERTRAND."

Dismayed by the mysterious import of this billet, Adelaide could not immediately assume courage to open the manuscript: but at length, after passing a few minutes in

in devotion, she once more took it, and read as follows:—

"When the unfortunate being who writes this sad memoir shall no more endure on earth the deep and overwhelming consciousness of his guilt, you will learn the sad cause of that grief which daily consumes him. My real name I will conceal, for it is too noble to be stained with my crimes. I was an only child, nursed in the lap of maternal indulgence: cherished and reared by the most mistaken fondness, the early display of my propensities to vice were considered as the mere ebullition of youthful folly: and at length, in the dawn of manhood, I was solely governed by the terrible empire of the passions, and plunged into the fathomless gulphs of atrocious guilt, was at last consigned to be the miserable prey of unavailing remorse, fear, despair, and shame. I was master of my fortune

tune and actions, at an age when I should have been studying the salutary lessons of self-controul, and acquiring a reverence for all the sweet attractions of virtue. But ah! I beheld virtue only with the unvaried wish of subduing her. But to what did I owe these fiendlike dispositions?—not to the fatal fondness of maternal credulity alone, but to the all-conquering influence of example—example, that seldom failing guide, which either leads us to the practice of all that is estimable and praise-worthy, or too surely lures us to the brink of perdition. On the death of my mother, which occurred when I was scarce seventeen, I became acquainted with the Chevalier de Bionville; and, as he was ten years older than myself, it is not wonderful that his specious manners, and brilliant talents, soon gained him an ascendancy over me, which I neither wished nor sought to shake off.—Divested of all religious principles, the world was to this man a scene in which he seemed, with delight, to assume any character

racter which should best forward his pleasures; and the versatility of his mind gave him the rare power of pleasing every body. But I will not shock you, holy father, by a relation of the horrible faults which marked eighteen years of my life in the society of Bionville, but proceed to those sad events, which, though they plunged me into the lowest abyss of guilt, were yet ultimately the means of my conversion. I had been, for nearly three years, acquainted with the present Marquis St. Viviers, and was, at the period to which I am going to refer, at the luxurious chateau of De Bionville, when he one day informed me that a stranger, his lady, and a servant, who had been benighted near the Castle of St. Viviers, had entreated accommodations there for the night, and had been admitted by the old Marquis, and treated with all possible respect and kindness. Bionville then run on in a strain of rapturous praise of the lady, Madame Durancy, she was called, whom he extolled above all women, for beauty

beauty and sweetness of manners; and added, that Eustace St. Viviers was already madly in love with her, but had not, as yet, found courage to tell her so. Alas! this young man, father, I well knew, was artful, and addicted to pleasure; but such had been the counteracting force of a good education, and the example of his father, that all Bionville's art, added to mine, could never induce him to launch into any excess, although he sometimes in secret joined our licentious parties at the Chateau de Bionville. The information, that Eustace was distractedly enamoured, was received by me with all the joy which a depraved mind feels in the anticipation of making others as wicked as itself; and I swore furiously, that the sly Eustace should be aided in his conquest of the lady with all the lessons which I could give him. Bent on the execution of this vile project, I flew to the castle—Oh, yes—forgetful of my innocent wife—forgetful that I was then a father, and that my meditated crimes might

fall

fall heavily on them. Alas! my senses are even now confused. I should have informed you, holy father, that I was privately married to a lovely young Englishwoman, the daughter of the Earl of Castleton.—She was formerly a boarder in a convent at Carpentras, from which I had stolen her, and we were married. Alas! she never more beheld her native land. In less than three years after her marriage, she died broken-hearted; and it was her dying request that her relations might never learn what had become of her, unless her son grew up, adorned with honour and virtue, and unlike his miserable father. He has fulfilled his mother's prayer; De Valmont is as good as he is noble. Ah! I have—But to return.—I was relating my infamous design, in flying to St. Viviers Castle.—But why—oh! why should I attempt to describe the horrible success which attended my diabolic scheme? Suffice it to say, that I conquered every remaining scruple in the mind of Eustace St. Viviers. In the absence

absence of her husband, he entered the apartment of Madame Durancy, by a secret pannel; and I, infamous that I was, I watched with his confidential servant, to prevent the intrusion of the credulous, infatuated Durancy. Yet blinded as he was, by the affected friendship of St. Viviers, I yet think that he suspected treachery; for he stole suddenly on me at the door of the anti-room. He heard his lovely wife's piercing cries—frantically he attempted to strike me down—we struggled.—Incensed by the well-deserved epithets of infamy, with which he loaded me, I raised my dagger—but he felled me to the ground; yet, alas! my hand was too certainly directed against him—my dagger pierced his heart! he tottered into the room, and expired; while I remained transfixed by horror at my own crime."

Here the manuscript had nearly fallen from the trembling hands of the shuddering Adelaïde, who could now but too well account for the dismay and confusion of both

both the guilty Marquis and the friar, at the mention of the name of Durancy.—Several moments elapsed, ere she could resume the perusal of the dreadful tale, which was continued as follows:—

"In less than an hour, the beautiful victim of my detestable plans died also, raging in convulsions. It was proved that robbers had done this deed of horror, and the youthful murdered pair were buried in the chapel of the castle. And my remorse—would not any human being suppose that it must be dreadful—that it must have been eternal?—No, it was transient. I was then incapable of being repentant.—But there were two persons who I dreaded might discover their knowledge and suspicion of my guilt; and I lived in so constant a dread, that I was compelled, before one of them, and that one was your father, to assume all the appearance of contrition. He was deceived; but the other, Bionville, was too discerning not to know me, and he told me so. The wretch! he availed himself

self of my crime, to commence my torturer. Amid all my vices, I loved and venerated my angelic wife: she had all the virtues of her countrywomen: she was beautiful, chaste, modest, and charitable; but her dignified manners I sometimes thought cold. She was a Catholic, and devout without bigotry. Bionville took advantage of my crimes, to assail the pure ears of my wife with a confession of a passion he had imbibed for her. She repulsed him like a true English wife; and the malicious fiend, in the first moments of his rage, discovered to her the horrible share I had had in the destruction of the innocent Durancys. He even gave her proof, in a letter written by me to himself, wherein I exulted in the near success of my plan for the seduction of Eustace St. Viviers. Elizabeth was convinced; she commanded him for ever from her presence, with an animation and spirit which the libertine found irresistible. But no sooner was she freed from the sight of this cruel being, than all exertion

exertion failed her. She drooped, and in a few days expired, adding another victim to my enormities. I was at this time ignorant of the cause of her sudden death, and, partly consoled by the deceitful friendship of Bionville, I placed my child under his care, intending, in compliance with his mother's dying request, to rear him as an orphan, lest the idea of future independance should create in him those habits which she wished him not to imbibe.—Shall I confess, that soon the idea of marrying again determined me never to acknowledge that I already had an heir, lest such a circumstance might thwart my plan. I still was in possession of unbounded wealth, for I never gamed, and I made a proper establishment for my son; and, while he was given to the care of the most virtuous and pious tutor we could select, I was again madly following the fatal career of pleasure and vice; and, would mortal believe such iniquity possible! I now turned all my arts to the vile purpose of seducing into

into guilt and destruction Louis St. Viviers, whom I then hated.—Oh, fatal attempt, that drew me only deeper into iniquity!"

"He succeeded then!" articulated Adelaide, in a hollow voice; and while the papers fell from her hands, she sunk on the floor in a deep swoon. When she once more opened her eyes, she found herself still extended on the floor, and the manuscript lying beside her. As her hurried, yet languid glance, fell on the fatal paper, which she feared contained so dreadful a memorial of her father's guilt and ruin, she turned away with shuddering horror, and almost frantically rising, she grasped the manuscript in her convulsed hand, and, unconscious of what she was about, cried—"Perish, terrible record of my parent's crime;" and had just begun to tear it, when a loud knocking at her chamber door compelled her to desist. She hid the papers behind the carved and gilded headboard of the bed, and then threw open the door.

It was Madame de Beauvais. She started back, on perceiving the wild disordered looks and now flushed cheek of Adelaide, who retreated from her as if she had been a scorpion, and falling on a couch, burst into tears.

Madame de Beauvais was just sitting down beside her, when a female domestic sent in Marcella to say that her Lord, the Marquis, desired to see Madame immediately.

"How unlucky!" angrily muttered the lady; and whispering the almost insensible Adelaide, said—"I cannot now see you till to-morrow," quitted the room, to the great joy of Marcella, whose simple cares soon restored the lovely afflicted girl to some degree of recollection.

But alas! the effects of the shock which she had received, from the perusal of Bertrand's harrowing story, could not be instantly removed; and during the remainder of the evening, she remained in a state of mind nearly bordering on distraction.

The deep cry and reproachful words, which the friar had uttered, as he hastily left the room, were indeed now most fully explained, as they must have originated in the idea that she had already perused his story, and had taken that method of evincing her detestation of his crimes.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

THE clock was striking ten, when starting up with the sudden remembrance, that in another hour she ought to attempt visiting the turret, Adelaide desired Marcella to retire to her closet; but the old woman would not depart till she had, by her entreaties, compelled her young lady to swallow a small glass of wine and water, after repeatedly assuring her that there was no opiate infused in it—a question which Adelaide had earnestly asked several times, ere she would consent to touch it.

As soon as Marcella had finished undressing her lady, she slowly retired to her own

own bed; and Adelaide now sought composure for her meditated attempt to visit the turret alone, by endeavouring to fix her thoughts on devotion.

At length the chilling horror and grief, which had almost unsettled her reason, became partly subdued by the influence of piety; for although grief was still predominant in her sad heart, yet it was now mingled with religious humility, and some portion of resignation.

Much more collected than she could have dared to hope to find herself, after such a day of misery, she once more stole from her couch, and threw on her mourning robes with haste; and when the clock struck eleven, she was nearly ready to depart.—She had taken the night lamp, but could not any where find her veil, and the looking for it occasioned some delay. This circumstance, however, did not cause her much regret, as she felt inclined to indulge a faint hope that the Marquis, and the other inhabitants of the castle, would be all re-

tired ere she ventured forth. At length, after an unsuccessful search for her veil, she was compelled to resolve on going without it, although it would have shielded her, she thought, from immediate recognition, should any of the domestics catch a glimpse of her, as she passed along the corridor, from the hall beneath; if indeed any of them could have the courage to look at her at all.

Softly she stole across the anti-chamber; but her light step instantly awakened her faithful guard, Cæsar, who, rising, shook his rugged coat, and followed her.

An involuntary dread, that the dog would this night lead to her being discovered, induced Adelaide to pause, and make every possible attempt to coax him to remain in the apartments; but the animal would not be obedient either to soothing or repulses, and persisted in continuing by her side. There now remained no alternative, but to suffer him to accompany her; and her terrors all reviving, as she

she hurried down the passage leading to the gloomy corridor, soon caused her to feel the value of Cæsar's attendance; as without him, she found she could have scarce had courage to venture on.

But this pleasing sensation was speedily converted into an agony of fear; for no sooner did she come in sight of the folding doors of the East gallery, than the dog flew towards them, and set up a howl so loud and dismal, that she had not power to move another step, till the melancholy echoes of the lofty hall had ceased to reverberate the dreadful yell. But scarce had they sunk into silence, when Cæsar returned to her side, whining and growling in such a doleful manner, that the apprehension which seized her, of certain discovery, had almost induced her to hasten back to her apartments. The want of power to move, alone prevented her from following this impulse; and ere her trembling limbs regained strength to enable her to stir from the ballustrade, against which she had

fallen, in the first moments of alarm, the deep silence that again prevailed around renewed her faint courage, and, with tottering steps, she hastened towards the West gallery, and at length had the satisfaction of passing through the pannel in safety, still followed closely by her dog.

After closing the pannel, and having ascended the flight of stone steps leading into the low-roofed room that opened on the battlements, with feeble trembling hands she attempted to draw back the rusty bolt of the little door; and just as she had succeeded, and was stepping out, a vivid flash of lightning glared in her eyes, and was followed by a loud peal of thunder, that seemed to shake the lofty castle to its foundation. Involuntarily she started back, and crossing herself, devoutly uttered an aspiration to Heaven. The door was still open, and soon the quick successive flashes of the red lightning displayed to her gaze the loftiest summits of the Alps, enrobed in fire, while the intervals of darkness, which

which succeeded, added a thousand horrors to the thunder's roar, repeated loud and often, by the echo of the mountains. The awful sight almost subdued the sorrow-weakened senses of the innocent sufferer. She sunk on her knees, and, nearly insensible, reclined her head on the rugged side of poor Cæsar, who, seemingly terrified at the lightning's blaze, had crouched at her feet as she stood leaning against the door.—Again the thunder rolled in tremendous peals above her head, and now the rain poured down in torrents, and, drifting in at the door, soon drenched the long light hair and garments of Adelaide, who still possessed not power to arise and shelter herself from the fury of the storm; while her faithful dog, as if proud of supporting the beauteous head of his mistress, also remained motionless. In a short time the rage of the tempest abated—the thunder was more distant—the lightning became fainter—the rain ceased—and at length the elements seemed hushed.

Gradually recovering, poor Adelaide tremblingly essayed to rise. The rain fell from her bright waving hair, and wetted her pale cheeks; but love gave warmth to her heart, and she heeded not that, nor the chill of her damp garments. Once more she stepped out on the battlements; all was dark without; her lamp still burned; but its feeble fluttering rays scarce served to point out a path over the broken fragments of stone, which lay scattered along the roofs. She shuddered, as she slowly crept amid these fallen ruins; for the dead silence which reigned in the still lowering atmosphere portended a return of the storm, and she dreaded lest she should lose her lamp, and find herself compelled to stop ere she could reach the turret. She had to keep along the West battlement, and part of the South, near the middle of which the turret stood. With difficulty she reached the angle, where no lofty tower arose to obstruct her course; for the castle was a very irregular building, and displayed several

ral styles of architecture. Just as she had turned this angle, a faint flash again illumined the Southern hemisphere. Alas! she saw her worst fears verified; the storm was rapidly returning; no veil shielded her eyes from the blaze of the forked lightning, nor sheltered her head from the rain drops. Fear now gave her renewed strength. She fled hastily on, over every impediment. Again the lightning darted across her path, and, illuminating all around, displayed to her view the dark turret within a few paces. Another moment brought her to the door. Almost frantically she undrew the massy bolt, and the next instant she was in the arms of her lover, just as the thunder burst over the castle, and, rocking the time-decaying turret, threatened to bury her with her beloved amidst its ruins.

"Adelaide! Henry!" were all these hapless lovers could articulate. Nearly insensible, from the excess of terror each suffered for the life of the other, they remained locked in the silence of suspensive horror,

till the tempest once more died away in low and distant murmurs.

Seated on a stone bench, which ran along one side of the room, St. Croix supported the fainting form of his Adelaide, whose pale cheek reclined on his shoulder, while he gazed, in indescribable agony, on her half-closed eyes, which were fixed on him with a look which spoke all of love and despair. The head of the dog rested on the knee of Adelaide, and the clasped hands of the lovers were supported on the head of the faithful animal, who seemed, with more than instinct, to fawn on both.

"Adelaide, my own Adelaide!" tremulously whispered St. Croix, as the last faint peal of thunder softly reverberated amid the Alps; "the elements are calm, and yet you revive not. Oh! do not look thus, lest the fear of learning, that yet unheard-of evils have befallen you, bereave me of my nearly-distracted senses."

The sound of his loved voice recalled Adelaide, in some measure, to herself.—

She

She opened her eyes, started, and looked wistfully in the face of her lover; then recoiled from his supporting arms, and, in a voice expressive of the deepest internal anguish, murmured—"Dare my St. Croix still call the child of a murderer his Adelaide?"

The Count now started back in wild dismay, while, with trembling lips, he exclaimed—"Who? What fiend in human shape has told my beloved the tale of horror, to which I too much fear she alludes?"

"It is then true! my father was then really a seducer and a murderer!" faintly articulated Adelaide, while horror seemed again to freeze her soul.

"Oh, Adelaide! oh, dearest, best beloved of maids, can you imagine me so cruel, so unjust, as to forget that the crimes of an erring parent ought not to sully the lustre of his child's virtues?" cried St. Croix, clasping her nearer to his heart. But she frantically struggled to get free, and ut-

tered the most heart-rending expressions, declaratory of her resolution of never more listening to the vows of an amiable lover, of whose affection she no longer deemed herself a worthy object.

Still the Count retained her in his encircling arms, and strove, by all love's soothing tenderness, to alleviate and calm the agony of her mind.

"Torture me not thus, my Adelaide," he said.—"Oh be not thus cruel to him who, if deprived of you, could no longer value his existence.—Inhuman, barbarous St. Viviers!" he continued, "this is thy malicious work. That monster has but revealed the sad tale of your father's crime to accelerate our ruin, and separate us for ever. On the morning succeeding the night when I was so mysteriously led down into the vaults, he revealed all to me, and then swore me to silence. His motive for breaking that silence is obvious. Oh, Adelaide! my best, my dearest treasure, suffer not the arts of that deceitful and inhuman fiend

fiend to effect that which all his cruelty and daring outrages have hitherto failed to accomplish. While thus confined, unsupported by hope, neither the promise of instant liberty, nor the threat of the most barbarous death, could prevail on me to resign thee. Oh, then, become not the dupe of that horrible villain, by thus weakly yielding to prejudices, false as they are ungenerous. With you there is no fate I am not ready to endure."

Slowly Adelaide raised her late drooping head. For a moment, a beam of grateful love illumined her beautiful eyes; but this tender expression was quickly succeeded by the most wild glance of agonized sorrow, as, in a tone of heart-rending grief, she said—

"But I am—oh! I cannot forget that I am the child of a murderer! and the love of St. Croix shall not tarnish his glory with infamy. I have a heart to love thee, Henry, truly, faithfully—even to the sacrifice of life—Oh, yes, I have courage to die

for you—but I have not courage to load your name with dishonour."

"Forbear! forbear! my adored, my beloved Adelaide!" cried St. Croix, gazing, in wild dismay, on her altered features: "confusion on the malicious foe who has impressed your artless mind with such horrible ideas.—Is it thus you hope to enable me to bear my miseries with patience? Is it thus, Adelaide," he added, "you animate me to endure these moments of agony with fortitude, by depriving me of the consolations which your affection has ever induced you to bestow on my distracted, tortured soul? Ah! then love has no longer an influence over your heart; and, by these cruelties, you seek to plunge me into a despair which must render my fate inevitable."

While St. Croix, scarcely conscious of what he said, attempted to divert the attention of Adelaide from the horrible images which filled her thoughts, she listened to him with indications of returning reason and

and sensibility. Her tears now fell fast on her bosom, and she again became sensible of her lover's danger only.

"Were you but free, dearest Henry," she sighed, while her tears almost impeded her utterance.

"Oh, my Adelaide! freedom can be valuable to me only as it can afford the means of liberating you," said the Count, experiencing a sensation of joy, on perceiving the returning composure of Adelaide.—When she became rather more calm, he said—"And now, will not my love say what has induced her to brave all the dangers of a night like this, and venture here alone? Why was not the Father Bertrand with you, my beloved?"

Adelaide now renewed all the alarms of her lover, by shrinking in dismay at the mention of Bertrand's name.

"Oh! name him not—let me never more hear the name of that cruel monster, that destroyer of my father!" she cried, while the convulsive shuddering which seized

seized her frame, evinced more clearly than her words, how much she abhorred the name of the friar.

"Hark! hark!" she wildly continued, "they are coming: the friar has discovered and betrayed me."

She hid her face on the shoulder of St. Croix, who clasped her to his bosom, while, with incredible horror, he plainly distinguished the sounds of voices, and footsteps approaching the turret.

Soon the red glare of torches shone through the grating in the door, and at this moment Cæsar, who had been growling for some minutes back, now sprung up, and, by his furious barking, overpowered the noise of the advancing intruders. In the next moment, the door of the turret was thrown open, and two men rushed in, undismayed by the rough attack of the dog, over whose neck one of them expertly threw a huge chain, and as instantly fastened it to a staple in the paved floor of the turret. And now several others, who had

as

as yet stood back, entered, and presented to the horror-struck eyes of St. Croix the Marquis St. Viviers, leaning on the arm of Father Bertrand, whose countenance, however, exhibited every indication of confusion, guilt, and shame.

The Marquis, pale with repressed passion, haughtily, and in an agitated voice, directed two of his attendants to remove Adelaide from the supporting arms of her lover, who instantly caught up one of the massy chains which had once fastened him to the floor, and had been filed through by the now treacherous Father Bertrand, and frantically vowed to kill the first being who should dare to approach him.

The mingled barking and cries of Cæsar rendered it almost impossible to distinguish what was said; but the action of St. Croix evinced his intention. His threat, however, was disregarded, and the Marquis himself flew to take Adelaide from him.—Haply she was insensible to the dangers which at that moment environed herself and

and her lover, who now, raising the ponderous chain, aimed a blow at the Marquis, but his hand was suddenly seized, and in less than three minutes he was overpowered by a number of assailants; and, while he rent the air with his cries to Heaven for assistance and vengeance on his foe, Adelaide was torn from his arms, and conveyed lifeless out of the turret, followed by the Marquis and Father Bertrand.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

WHEN the miserable victim of the Marquis's persecutions re-opened her eyes, she found herself supported by Madame de Beauvais, before the illuminated altar of a dilapidated chapel belonging to the castle, and the first sound which struck her ears was the monotonous voice of an old friar, who was reading the marriage ceremony.—Electrified by the sound, Adelaide started on her feet; she gazed around on all sides; she was environed by time-decayed fragments of pillars. The wind roared through the shattered roof, and flared the tall tapers on the altar. All was reality.

"Desist!

"Desist! monsters of atrocity, desist!" she cried.

Her voice, raised in the wildest accents of frantic amazement and horror, checked the priest, and impressed, for a moment, an involuntary awe on those around her: but the Marquis almost instantly seized her hand, and, in a voice loud and angry, commanded the priest to proceed. He obeyed, nor cast another glance at the hapless victim, who now rent the air with piercing shrieks, and struggled, with almost more than mortal efforts, to fly. Alas! the priest regarded her not. Madame de Beauvais was dismayed, but silent, while the Villettes laughed at her agonies, and encouraged the cruel St. Viviers to persevere in his horrible outrage.

In vain were the heart-piercing shrieks and frantic struggles of the devoted Adelaide. The Marquis grasped her hand.—She heard the fatal ceremony close; and she sunk, lifeless, on the broken steps of the altar.

In

In this state of insensibility, she was conveyed to her chamber, and left to the care of Madame de Beauvais and Marcella, much, however, against the strenuous advice and representations of the Villettes, who loudly urged the Marquis to remain with, and endeavour to assist in the recovery of his lady.

St. Viviers, however, had not courage to meet the glance of the lovely being, whose ruin he had thus effected; and participating, in some degree, in the renewed remorse of Madame de Beauvais, he withdrew, resolving not to venture into the sight of Adelaide till the first shock of her outraged feelings should in some measure subside. But notwithstanding the nature of his present sentiments, she was chiefly indebted for his absence to the vexation and perplexity in which he found himself involved, respecting the Count St. Croix, whose existence and confinement in the castle having been discovered by Adelaide, was a circumstance that seemed to threaten

threaten him with much trouble and danger. How she had made this discovery, he was yet to learn; for as he imagined himself secure of the friendship of the Father Bertrand, he did not in the least suspect that the father had led Adelaide to the prison of her lover; and indeed the Marquis's knowledge of her recent visit to the turret was obtained by mere accident. In his intentions of not so speedily forcing her into a marriage with himself, he had really been sincere; and it was only a few hours prior to his intrusion on the lovers, that a circumstance occurred that impelled him either to force the lovely maid to become his that very night, or perhaps run the hazard of losing her for ever. It was not difficult for St. Viviers to determine on the first alternative; and having hastily summoned Father Bertrand, and the priest who was to perform the ceremony, he gave orders for the old chapel to be instantly illuminated, and then requested Bertrand to accompany him to the apartments of Adelaide.

laide. The friar, while he trembled at the anticipation of what might be the result of Adelaide's reproaches to himself for insidious and artful double dealing, was in too much awe of the Marquis to dare to refuse, and of course attended his steps towards the apartments of the amiable girl. At this time the storm was raging violently, and the blue lightning's vivid flashes streamed through the painted casements of the high arched windows of the halls and galleries through which they passed. On reaching Adelaide's rooms, they found the door of the anti-chamber wide open. This circumstance filled St. Viviers with fear and rage, lest she had escaped; and the friar as quickly conjectured, that if she was absent, she could only be gone to the turret.

Bereft of prudence, by his fears, the Marquis called loudly on the name of Adelaide, and rushed into the interior rooms; and here the first object that met his view was Marcella, on her knees, praying and crossing herself with devout rapidity,

dity, and seemingly too terrified to be able to observe him, till after thrice demanding of her "where was her lady," she started up in affright, and declared that she believed her dear young lady had by this time fallen over the battlements of the castle, and was crushed to death.

The mere mention of the battlements was quite sufficient to inform the now doubly enraged St. Viviers where Adelaide was to be found, as he rightly conjectured that she could only have ventured out on the battlements to visit the turret where her lover was confined.

Instantly rushing from the apartment, he flew and summoned two men, who had been received as servants into the castle at the time of the Count's being brought there; and as they were the very wretches who had been employed on the occasion, and one of them was the keeper of St. Croix's prison, the Marquis ran no hazard in commanding their attendance thither; and instantly obeying the impulses of his excessive

excessive rage and jealousy, he hastened to the turret, and, unmoved by the voice of humanity, tore the fainting Adelaide from the arms of her lover, and at the altar completed the barbarity of his conduct, by the profanation of the sacred marriage ceremony: and when he withdrew from the apartments of his victim, endeavoured to console himself with the idea, that even should she continue to repulse him, that he could, without much difficulty, render her amenable to his will, by terrifying her by threats to deprive the Count of life, unless she endeavoured to be submissive to her fate; nor did he despair of compelling her to persuade St. Croix to accept of liberty, on the long offered terms of inviolable silence; for as the Count could have nothing more to hope for, from a steady refusal to his proposals, the Marquis doubted not, from the representations of Adelaide, that her tranquillity must depend on his being restored to liberty, which would at length induce St. Croix to accede to his wishes.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

WHILE the Marquis was congratulating himself on the success of some of his plans, and enjoying the anticipation of others, Adelaide lay at the door of the grave.—In a few hours the convulsions had ceased, but the most frightful swoons had succeeded; and for several days, in every interval of pain and insensibility, she evinced that she regarded the horrible events, which had reduced her to such a state, as a terrific dream, or the effect of delirium, a delusion Madame de Beauvais was careful not to chase from her mind, lest the knowledge of her having been really united to the Marquis

quis should quickly change her illness into confirmed madness.

With this design, Madame had removed the ring from her finger, and would not permit Madame Villette to enter the room.

In one of her intervals of reason, Adelaide earnestly asked whether the Count St. Croix was still in the castle, or whether he had at length fallen a victim to the cruel perfidy of the Marquis?

Madame de Beauvais and Marcella protested that they knew nothing about the Count, and evinced, by their faint surprise, that they imagined her questions were the effect of insanity.

Finding all her enquiries respecting her lover unavailing, she asked for the dog, which she now recollected had been chained in the turret; but neither Madame nor Marcella knew ought of the animal; and Adelaide, in an agony of renewed alarm, demanded to see the Marquis.

She arose, and, when dressed, directed

that the Marquis should instantly be summoned to attend her in the anti-room.

Astonished, and full of agitative expectation, he obeyed this summons, and speedily presented himself in the anti-chamber.

Involuntarily compelled, by the excessive weakness which oppressed her frame, Adelaide accepted the support of Madame de Beauvais, and entered the anti-room, leaning on the arm of that lady, whose features were now scarcely less pallid than her own.

Adelaide indeed looked the death-like resemblance of despair; her large blue eyes had in them an expression of the deepest woe; and her beautifully arched brows, half veiled by the glossy ringlets, which flowed on her fair forehead, were evidently contracted by the hand of grief; an ashy paleness was diffused over her lovely countenance, and her whole air and manner betrayed the internal anguish which aimed at her life.

The

The alarming appearance of her looks, her long mourning robe and dishevelled hair, struck the Marquis with such a sensation of awe and terror, that he could not approach to meet her, but stood motionless, and almost overpowered by the emotion which she inspired.

Adelaide, on the contrary, appeared to feel no apparent agitation; it seemed as if the excess of her woe had bereft her of all earthly feelings. She raised her sad eyes, and fixed them on the Marquis with the gaze of one who expects that death will speedily release them from persecuting power, and, in a low and plaintive, yet solemn tone, which penetrated the heart of her cruel foe with fear and surprise, she said—

"I have desired this interview, my Lord Marquis, to learn, from your own lips, what are your further intentions respecting the Count St. Croix?"

"His fate, adorable Adelaide," replied the Marquis, throwing himself at her feet, "must depend on you alone; the deci-

sion which you shall deign to make for my happiness, can alone secure his safety.—Say that you forgive the rash precipitancy which circumstances compelled me to adopt to obtain your hand, and you shall behold the Count at liberty."

"I was prepared for this absurd mockery—Marquis, I despise it. Too fatally I know, that, by the most horrible act of force, you claim me as your wife. But mark me—On one condition only will I ever acknowledge that abhorred title.—I know you.—I too well know, that a heart like your's is capable of the most atrocious acts.—I tremble for my—for the Count's life—give me his life, his liberty, and I will pardon all."

While Adelaide spoke, the Marquis listened, in a transport of amazement and delight; and instantly resolving to affect to grant to her fears what he had before determined to do, he said—

"My beauteous bride! Enchanting Adelaide!—Yes—this St. Croix, who was the

the object of my hatred, only as his pretensions to you placed a bar to my hopes of calling you mine—this St. Croix shall be instantly set free. Can I refuse the request of my soul's adored idol? But certainly my Adelaide will not deem my conditions severe, when I say that the Count cannot depart, till he has bound himself by the most sacred oath, never to reveal the nature of his recent residence in this castle."

"Oh! he shall promise all. My St. Croix cannot—will not refuse to listen to my supplications, and he shall promise all you ask," exclaimed Adelaide, the wildest expression of joy illumining her eyes; "let me instantly behold him, and surely my entreaties cannot fail."

"Behold him!" echoed the Marquis; "that is impossible; you torture me by such a request."

"I must see him, Marquis," replied Adelaide.—"Do you hope that I shall depend on your word alone? Impossible!

I must see him—I must tell him, that on his compliance rests my existence. I must be convinced of his safety, ere I can teach my heart to submit to the dreadful sacrifice I meditate."

"Is this the language of persuasion, Adelaide?" cried the Marquis, repressing, with the utmost difficulty, the display of the keen pangs which jealousy and wounded pride caused him to feel.—"Do you call it a sacrifice to accept the devotion of a husband who idolizes you—of a husband whose crimes originated in the excess of tenderness he cherishes for you?"

"Tenderness — tenderness," repeated Adelaide, in a soft low tone of the wildest sadness.—"Ah! the tenderness of real love is never selfish. Henry would not have dragged me to the altar; he would not have made my soul tremble in all the agonies of despair.—No, no.—Oh let me see him; suffer me to say to him that his forbearance, even towards you, is necessary to my peace—and you shall then perceive

ceive with what resignation real love will sacrifice its own felicity, to procure even a transient consolation for the object of its tenderness."

The Marquis turned from the lovely supplicant, on whose beautiful countenance was now pourtrayed all the enthusiasm of pure exalted love, mingled with an expression of wildness. He could not endure the glance of her half vacant, half wandering eyes, and he would have retreated, but she detained him by a faint shriek, and another heart-rending appeal to be permitted to see her lover once more.

"Fascinating enslaver!" exclaimed the Marquis, "you inspire me with the most contradictory sentiments—you infuriate my breast with jealousy, and yet I can refuse nought to your entreaties.—Be composed—you shall see the Count this evening. From your own hands he shall receive his liberty; and to-morrow I shall claim the gratitude and affections of my charming bride."

He now tenderly embraced the unconscious maid, and withdrew, exulting in the astonishing and unexpected result of his interview.

Elated with this event, he proceeded almost immediately, accompanied by the keeper of St. Croix's prison, to the turret, where the hapless young man lay writhing on the floor, in agonies of mind which baffle all description, while poor Cæsar moaned over him, and shook the massy chain, that prevented his nearer approach to the poor sufferer. According to the Marquis's direction, the man unfastened the chain which confined St. Croix, and, without releasing him from those which fastened his hands, requested him to walk out on the battlements.

The unhappy Count, who now expected that the Marquis was about to complete his enormities by depriving him of life, hesitated not in obeying this command, and instantly, with feeble tottering steps, left the turret.

The

The Marquis turned pale, as he glanced his eyes on the face and form of St. Croix; the beauty and symmetry for which he had been eminently distinguished, were still apparent, although injured and changed by the long confinement he had suffered, and the severe mental agonies he had endured. Haughtily he bent his large dark eyes on his persecutor, and said—

"Does the honourable Marquis St. Viviers deign to assume the assassin's part, and himself take the life of the man whom——"

"You are unjust—I come to give you liberty," interrupted the Marquis, falteringly.

The stroke of death now seemed to have deprived St. Croix of all his faculties; for he reeled, and, with a deep groan, fell against the indented battlements near him.

The keeper gently raised his head. He once more opened his languid eyes, and gazing with a look of horror on the Mar-

quis, articulated—"You come to give me liberty.—Then Adelaide is dead!"

"She is now my wife," said the Marquis, in a voice of excessive agitation.

"'Tis false!—'tis false—It cannot be!" exclaimed St. Croix, starting up with wildness.

"Will you hear so from her own lips?" asked the Marquis, haughtily.

There was now something in the manner of the Marquis which gave conviction to the undone St. Croix. Pale and trembling, he repeated—"From her own lips! your wife! St. Viviers, if this be true, you have indeed struck an unerring dagger to my soul. Oh, Adelaide! Oh my ruined love! Dear victim—we shall soon meet beyond the grave.—Mark me, thou monster of cruelty," cried the young man, his full mellow voice changing from the plaintive tones of heart-broken sorrow, to the loud appaling note of wild indignation, "if, as thou sayest, my angel Adelaide is become

thy

thy wife, she is thine by force alone—for her pure lips could never pronounce a vow to love that which her soul must abhor.—Give me not liberty—unless you mean to meet all that my fiercest vengeance can inflict on thee.—No, give me death; for you have deprived me of all that could render life a blessing."

Exhausted by the racking violence of his feelings, St. Croix paused, and the Marquis said—"If you do not mean to be the death of her whom you avow to be so dear to you, you will do well to resign yourself to your destiny. She is mine beyond the possibility of separation; and 'tis at the earnest request of Adelaide that I am here to say, that it is her entreaty, that as you value her peace, you will hold sacred the honour of her husband."

"Oh, thou mean despicable wretch!" exclaimed St. Croix, his eyes flashing fury, "and hast thou not the sense to perceive that 'tis my safety this angelic being would ensure? Your honour! What honour

do you possess?—Impostor—assassin! No, spare me not! Fulfil the extent of your crimes, and, after having, by the basest means, possessed yourself of the lovely victim of your cruelty, stab to the heart him who now swears never to forgive thee."

"Hold, rash boy, your oaths will but effectually crush the being whose idea inspires you with this frenzy," cried the Marquis loudly: then, in a more composed manner, he added—" St. Croix, I have borne, with patience, the opprobrious language you have used, because I can allow for the feelings of disappointed affection. Love has urged me to the commission of inexcusable crimes; shall I then not pardon your rashness? Alas! the possession of Adelaide has not made me happy. I will not deny that she did not voluntarily bestow on me her hand; but to that which is past recall she is inclined to submit; and she may yet become reconciled to her unalterable destiny, provided

you

you acquiesce in her wishes. I can allow much to the impassioned feelings of youth; I acknowledge that Adelaide does feel only for her Henry's safety; then be free, St. Croix; sacredly promise her, that all which has passed between us shall be for ever buried in oblivion. You can return to your regiment with honour, for I will furnish you with well-feigned proofs of having been thus long imprisoned in the haunt of robbers, from whence you may affect to have just escaped. Consider of what avail will your vengeance against me be. Once the husband of Adelaide, I am certain, that should I fall by your hand, she has too delicate a mind to wed the murderer of the man to whom she has been devoted by duty; you can therefore hope nothing, from yielding to the impulses of your own resentment."

A proud, contemptuous sneer marked the features of St. Croix as the Marquis spoke; but the varying hues which stole over his features evinced the internal strug-

gles

gles which rent his heart. But disdaining to hold any further converse with such a being—" Well, then," he said, when the Marquis ceased, " if to Adelaide I yield the thirst of just revenge which burns within my bosom, it shall be at her personal command only. I will see and hear her, and then decide. If she has power to influence me to promise not to revenge our mutual wrongs, I will never cease to respect my word."

" This night then you shall behold her," said the Marquis, internally exulting in the romantic ardour of the young Count, whom he now directed the keeper to conduct to an apartment in the castle, whither he himself accompanied them.

It was into the private cabinet of the Marquis that the Count was led. He was offered wine and other refreshments, all of which were disdainfully rejected by him; and he impatiently demanded to be immediately permitted to see Adelaide.

The Marquis said he would instantly conduct

conduct her to the cabinet, and he withdrew for that purpose, leaving the keeper, however, to attend to the motions of St. Croix, who, during the absence of the Marquis, suffered the most acute torments of mind.

"And she is his wife!" he repeatedly exclaimed, in a voice wild and tremulous, "my Adelaide is St. Viviers' wife!"

"Ay, ay, she is his wife indeed, my Lord," said the rough keeper, even affected by the deep anguish of his young prisoner. "But he has not had much comfort in her company, for all that; for she has been in strong convulsions almost ever since, and would not suffer him to come near her."

St. Croix would now have asked a hundred anxious questions, but the opening of the door prevented him; and turning his eyes towards it, he was almost deprived of sense, by beholding Adelaide, pale, and nearly fainting, supported by the Marquis.

The Count had not power to move, but almost sinking under the influence of despair,

pair, gazed on the idolized treasure of his soul, incapable of articulating a word.

The Marquis placed her on a sofa, and attempted, by his caresses and assiduous tenderness, to soothe her spirits.

St. Croix was almost enfrenzied by this display of the privilege the Marquis had so basely obtained, and the shuddering horror with which Adelaide faintly repelled these attentions, so well assured him of her misery, that he was still devoid of the power of articulation. She was the first who recovered ability to speak; but, alas! her attempted composure evinced most forcibly that her heart was already struck by the keen arrow of incurable despair.

Fixing her beautiful eyes on the pallid countenance of St. Croix, who, leaning for support against the wainscot, stood gazing on her with a look of wild unutterable woe; she said—"I am informed that the Count St. Croix has not from me to learn that I—I am the wife of another."—Her voice failed her for a moment, but, in a lower tone,

tone, she resumed,—"A short time, a very short time, and you will also learn that my sorrows are past; and over the grave of his Adelaide Henry may shed those tears which he must not now indulge."

St. Croix groaned aloud, and, with one violent effort, burst the rusty chain which confined his hands, and was in an instant at the feet of Adelaide, who sunk into his arms.

Astonished and enraged, the Marquis, who was standing beside the sofa, attempted to remove her; but the Count clasped her more closely; while the lovely afflicted sufferer raised her head, and, with one hand, repulsed the Marquis, as she gently disengaged herself from the embrace of her lover, saying, "Have patience and consideration for a few minutes, Marquis. In yielding to the impulse of tenderness, which has just overpowered my heart, I submitted to the influence of sentiments, which an angel might not blush to avow. From infancy

fancy, my heart has been the Count's. Our love is not the destructive impetuous passion which owns no principle but the detested one of self-gratification; and we will evince the purity of our affection, by the firm resolution with which we will perform our duties. Henry—dear friend—brother," she continued, in a tone which, while its softness thrilled to the soul of St. Croix, filled the bosom of the Marquis with the most sullen rage—" I am become the wife of another—I will not say how this has happened—you know my heart, and need no explanation.—The Marquis, no longer influenced by the dominion of passion," she added, " restores you to the liberty which he now repents having so unjustly deprived you of, on condition that you endeavour to pardon what you have suffered, and consent to maintain a rigid and inviolable silence on the subject. Will you not, for my sake, accede to this? Oh! do not, by reflecting too deeply on this point, deprive me of the only hope which buoys

buoys up my existence, the hope of knowing that you are in safety. Hesitate not to promise this, or I shall expire."

To paint the internal struggles with which the Count listened to this proposition, would be impossible. Every feeling of his soul was alternately pourtrayed in his agitated countenance, while the fear of terrifying the beloved of his heart alone checked him from starting up, and exerting his feeble strength to fell the monster to the earth who had reduced her to such a state. His Adelaide, he perceived, could not long survive the stroke which had destroyed all her earthly felicity; and could he, by his refusal of her entreaties, embitter her few remaining days? But was it possible to permit the abominable author of her sufferings to elude his vengeance? Distracted and irresolute, he paused; but at length, suddenly starting from his torturing reflections, he exclaimed, looking with haughty contempt on the Marquis—

"And you expect that I can pronounce a solemn vow to conceal your abominable guilt? you imagine that I can recollect this hour, and yet be silent?"

"I do," replied St. Viviers, coldly;—"I well know that your oath, if once taken, will be held most sacred; nor can I believe that you will, by persisting in a weak refusal of my proposals, compel me to resort to a measure which, although my own security would most strenuously urge, I yet cannot resolve on practising, when there is an alternative, which I would again advise you not to reject."

While the Marquis spoke, the eyes of St. Croix had been fixed on the pale features of Adelaide, who, shuddering at the import of her tyrant's threats, regarded the Count with a look of such agonized tenderness and intreaty, that in pity to her his soul adored, he wildly exclaimed—

"I accept your proposals, Marquis—you have too long had the power of satiating your

your hatred of a rival, and I will now release you from the irksome and dangerous task."

"Then swear," said the Marquis, presenting to the Count a small ivory crucifix, which he snatched off a table near him, "swear," he continued, "swear to observe an inviolable secrecy on all that has passed between us."

"I swear," said the Count, devoutly pressing the crucifix to his trembling lips, and repeating, after the Marquis, the solemn vow, which was to ensure his silence.

Ere the Count had concluded the last sentence of the oath, Adelaide, unable longer to support the emotion of her mind, fainted.

The Marquis now hastily caught her in his arms, and, with the utmost rapidity, bore her from the room, while St. Croix gnashed his teeth in frantic agony, at the dreadful reflection, that as she was the wife of St. Viviers, he dared not insult the purity of her

her name, by shewing her those attentions which her situation permitted her to receive only from her husband.

Resigning his lovely victim to the care of Marcella, the Marquis instantly returned to the room where he had left the miserable St. Croix, who, on again perceiving him, could scarcely restrain the violent rage and distraction of his mind from venting its excess in words and deeds. But quickly recollecting his oath, and but too well assured, that, should any present encounter with the Marquis prove fatal to himself, that Adelaide would not survive the shock which such an event would occasion her, he made an effort to suppress any further indication of his feelings, and haughtily demanded to be suffered to leave the castle.

"Relying on your oath, Count, and your consideration for the tranquillity of Adelaide, I certainly shall permit your departure. And remember, that on your silence

silence and forbearance depends the future peace of one who has been so very dear to you."

The Marquis now drew aside a sliding pannel, and then led the agitated St. Croix through various winding passages and vaults, until he had conducted him to a small opening, which terminated in a cave on the opposite side of the mountain on which the castle stood.

St. Viviers once more repeated—"Remember thy oath, St. Croix," and precipitately retreated into the interior of the cave, leaving the Count, who was almost stupified with grief and amazement, at the rocky entrance of the cave. Here he threw himself on the mossy ground, and for some time remained absorbed in all the torpor of despair.

The moon was slowly rising, when once more he raised his languid head, and suffered all the agonizing return of sensibility and woe. Again had his feelings nearly overwhelmed his senses, and a hundred times

times he distractedly repeated—"My Adelaide! my Adelaide is lost for ever—for ever dear to me!"—Wild and frantic were the execrations which rose to his lips, against the Marquis. But alas! as the crimes of St. Viviers returned in torturing recollections to his mind, the dark deed, which he had but too much reason to know had been really perpetrated by the father of his Adelaide, likewise struck on his appalled memory, and he fancied he beheld, in the ruin of that innocent being and himself, the punishment of that guilty act: for that the supposed Count St. Viviers had been the murderer of Gario, appeared but too evident, from the circumstances which had afterwards occurred.

The more the miserable St. Croix reflected on this point, the more deeply impressed on his mind was the conviction that Adelaide was indeed lost to him for ever; for well he knew, that should he endeavour to invalidate her enforced marriage, and succeed in the attempt, that the Marquis would

would instantly publish the crime of her father, and thus brand Adelaide with the infamy of being the daughter of a murderer.—Already it was evident that her knowledge of her father's guilt had made the most dreadful impression on her soul; and the look with which she had implored the Count to pronounce the oath of silence and secrecy, required by the Marquis, had spoken so much of heart-felt despondency, that it seemed but too probable that she would soon bid adieu to the world of sorrow, in which she now but merely existed.

While these mournful and torturing reflections passed in the mind of St. Croix, he mechanically wandered along the pathway through the valley; and, as the morning dawned, found himself in Grenoble, where he sought shelter in an inn, and for some days lost the consciousness of his grief in the delirium of a fever.

CHAP. VI.

ON recovering from her swoon, Adelaide perceived that she was in her own room, most assiduously attended by Madame de Beauvais. Consternation and dread instantly seized her mind, and she wildly demanded where was the Marquis and the Count? Scarce had she spoken, when the Marquis entered the room, and, in reply to her eager enquiries respecting the Count, she learned that he had just quitted the castle. Suspicious and incredulous from fear, she could not disguise what she felt, and the Marquis confirmed his assertion by a horrid oath; assuring her likewise

wise that she would, on the morrow, be convinced of the Count's departure, as he had intimated that he intended to send a few lines to the castle, with information of his safety.

"Your suspicions induce you to imagine that I have still detained him, Adelaide," said the Marquis, reproachfully; "but this is extremely unjust. Indeed, a moment's reflection will convince you of the inutility of my so doing. I am perfectly convinced that I may rely on the oath of the Count; and, as his silence will be my certain security from any unpleasant consequences which might result from a discovery, wherefore should I cause you so much infelicity as I perceive the continued confinement of the Count would occasion you? No, beloved Adelaide, I am not capable of such wickedness and folly. Love only could have power to make me act as I have done to obtain you; and shall I, now that my heart exults in the prospect of bliss which opens to my view, forget the

gratitude I owe for your forgiveness, and still persecute one who is sufficiently miserable in having lost you?"

The Marquis now attempted to enfold Adelaide to his bosom, but she shrunk from him; and, alledging that she was still too much indisposed to converse any longer, entreated him to leave her to recover herself in solitude. Mortified as the Marquis felt at this repulse, he nevertheless thought proper to yield to her wishes, and, with affected submission, and internal reluctance, withdrew, after intimating that he could not long endure such cruel reserve. However, it is certain that his fears, lest her life should be endangered by any present opposition to her will, alone induced him to be thus submissive. When he had departed, Adelaide retired into her chamber, and sought, in devotional exercise, for strength and support from Heaven, to enable her to carry into execution a resolve which lay deep in the recesses of her heart, and which indeed had given

given her courage to avow the determination which she seemed to have formed, of acknowledging, as lawful, the enforced union which had taken place between herself and the Marquis; and her full determination was now, if possible, to seize the first opportunity of appealing against the illegality of her marriage.

While she was thus piously employed, Madame de Beauvais was summoned to the East saloon, where the Marquis requested her company, in order to consult with her as to his further proceedings.

The conversation of Madame de Beauvais inspired the mind of the Marquis with the most pleasing anticipations of happiness; for she represented Adelaide as perfectly submissive to her fate; and as the idea that such was really the case had considerably weakened the remorse which she had suffered for the part she had taken in he affair, she again talked with fluent gaiety; and, when the Marquis declared his intention of having a wedding banquet

on the following night, in the newly decorated Western hall, she applauded the idea, and only regretted that circumstances would not permit the Marquis to invite any stranger to the feast. However, it was still a feast; and, although the guests would be composed of only the Marquis and new Marchioness, herself, Bionville, and the Villettes, yet she did not dislike the prospect of gaiety which even this circumscribed assembly presented.

But it is now time to declare the motives which induced the Marquis to hasten with so much precipitance the union which he had effected with Adelaide. When he had written to inform her that he intended to delay, for a short time, his plans to that end, he had been sincere; but Madame Villette had so forcibly represented to him that Adelaide's indisposition was chiefly feigned, and that she must have some private motive for this pretended illness, that he resolved to conclude all further anxiety on the subject, by making her his wife that very

very night, or the next. But deeming it essential to his interest to ascertain what were her views, in affecting an indisposition, under which she did not in reality labour, he devised, with Madame de Beauvais, a stratagem for the discovering Adélaide's intentions; and, in consequence of this consultation, Madame de Beauvais proposed to the lovely unconscious victim of so much treachery, the plan of aiding her escape from the castle. This, however, did not fully succeed; for although Adelaide most eagerly accepted Madame's offers, yet she did not avow the having formed any design of her own. Thus they remained ignorant of her intentions; and it was therefore finally agreed, in consequence of some other circumstances, that the marriage should be attempted on the following night, when Father Bertrand, who had long been in the confidence of the Marquis, promised to provide a priest to perform the sacred ceremony. The motives which inducted the father to conduct him-

self with so much apparent friendship and mystery towards Adelaide, were known only to himself; and how far the Marquis was acquainted with this business, will appear hereafter. Certain it is, however, that Bertrand dreaded the Marquis more than he ever feared Bionville; and it is highly probable that the mysterious nocturnal disturbances which rendered the castle a scene of terror to all its inmates, had deeply affected the father, although they could not alter his long practised habits of submitting to those who had acquired over him a power which he knew not how to shake off. How well the plans of the Marquis respecting Adelaide succeeded, has already been related; however, as he certainly found the result much more pleasing than he had dared to hope it would prove, it is not surprising that he should find himself more than usually elated by his success, and that he triumphed in the pride of security. In respect to St. Croix, he had really given him liberty, and firmly

firmly depended on the Count's adherence to his oath; while at the same time he inwardly laughed at the religious and honourable sentiments on which he rested his hopes of St. Croix's silence, and his own future safety. As to any attempts he might be feared to make to deprive him of Adelaide, the Marquis well knew, that the same principles which animated the amiable lovers to separate in such a manner, would also prove the best security for their never seeking to meet again; St. Croix's high sense of honour, and pure regard for Adelaide, rendering it almost impossible that he would ever think of her with the idea of indulging his passion for an amiable being who was now the wife of another; and the Marquis was equally certain that Adelaide would never deviate from that chaste and timid delicacy which formed the most striking feature of her character.

Thus far all had succeeded according to his most sanguine wishes; and as Adelaide had tacitly acknowledged that she con-

sidered the enforced marriage as sufficiently binding, by allowing that she was his wife, he doubted not but that she would immediately suffer him to present her in that character, both at Court and to all the world. By no means less eager to leave the castle than his guests were, the Marquis intended setting off with his beautiful bride for Paris in the course of a few days, where he expected to receive a most flattering reception from the monarch, to whom he really had produced such proofs of Adelaide's claims to the name of De Monterci, that no doubt had existed on the subject; and his appeal for the restoration of the forfeited estates of the banished Count de Monterci had ultimately met with the most brilliant success.

But the prospects of splendour and honour with which his fancy flattered him, could not have induced him so soon to leave St. Viviers Castle, had not the supernatural mysteries, which had occurred there, and which had hitherto baffled all investi-

gation, rendered the place so dreadful a residence, that he had not the courage to remain in it.

The character of the Marquis was composed of the most striking contrarieties: he was by turns an Infidel, an Atheist, a Deist, or a most bigoted Catholic. In the earliest dawn of childhood, he had been taught the utmost reverence and zeal for his religion, and had been most carefully instructed in all the rites and ceremonies of the church; and, in some degree, he had retained these lessons till the commencement of his acquaintance with the Chevalier Bionville, who left no art unpractised to divest him of all religion; and in this he had so far succeeded, that the Marquis at length had professed himself entirely freed from what he called the superstitious prejudices of his youth, and of course commonly acted in a manner suitable to a man who neither venerated his Creator, nor regarded his fellow beings; that is, that considering this life as the only period of the

soul's existence, he very naturally (and as all who profess Atheistical principles certainly do) concluded that morality was a mere phantom, or a veil worn to enable men of superior genius to benefit by the weakness and follies of those not so enlightened as themselves, and to procure what alone seemed worthy of pursuit in the world, self-gratification.

Accommodating, however, as the Marquis usually found this creed, yet there were moments when the voice of an internal monitor proclaimed aloud to his mind the certain existence of a Deity, and the immortality of the soul; and while the influence of this conviction continued, the Marquis was a Deist, and peremptorily denied the truth of Revelation, till the commission of some crime, which, by raising the keenest stings of conscience, drove him into a state of transient attrition, when he usually sought peace to his soul, by secretly unburthening his mind to some confidential and indulgent priest, who enjoined him

him penances, which he certainly never failed to perform; nor did he omit to procure an absolution, although at the most expensive rate.

Thus alternately enslaved by horrible and erroneous principles, of one sort or the other, the Marquis had passed so many years of his life, and was still the same character, when Adelaide had appeared beneath his roof. His lady he had never cared for; and the fear of being deprived of some part of her great wealth, still at her own disposal, had alone induced him to treat her with apparent respect, and to adopt an eccentric mode of conduct in the regulation of his household, which should lead her to imagine herself the only woman on earth whom he regarded. In this idea the late Marchioness had long continued, till some time after Adelaide had been introduced into the castle, when she happened to find the copy of a letter he had written to Bionville, in which he spoke of Adelaide in such terms, as put it beyond a doubt that he had conceived

conceived for her the most violent passion.

Shocked and amazed, the unhappy Marchioness had her Lord instantly summoned to her apartment; and having given him the copy of his letter, upbraided him, in the severest terms, for indulging such abominable sentiments for his own niece.—The Marquis resolutely denied all, and promised, as a proof of his sincerity, to unite Adelaide, as speedily as possible, to the Count St. Croix.

The Marchioness was at length pacified, and they were reconciled; but, alas! she soon perceived that she was his dupe, and she quickly died, a victim to the neglect and cruelty she had experienced from a man, whom she had believed to be a model of perfection.

The delight which her death occasioned her Lord was beyond all bounds, as this event opened to him a prospect which he had never hoped to behold; that is, it presented the possibility of Adelaide's being induced

induced to become Marchioness St. Viviers. His supposed near relationship to her he well knew would prove an insuperable bar to the accomplishment of his hopes; for he very justly estimated the character of Adelaide, when he felt convinced that no dispensation of the Pope's could reconcile her to such an union.

Thus circumstanced, it will readily be supposed that his joy, at possessing the means of doing away this insurmountable obstacle, was excessive. He instantly dispatched his proofs of her being in no degree related to himself or family; and now conceiving that Madame de Beauvais possessed ample powers for rendering the lovely object of his passion compliant with his wishes, he resolved that she should visit the chateau of that lady, as he hoped that the gaiety and dissipation which usually reigned there would soon efface the grief which hung on the spirits of the lovely girl. A few days, however, previous to their setting off, he received a letter from the

the friend in Paris, to whom he had dispatched the proofs of Adelaide's birth, and by whose great interest he had hoped to procure the restoration of the large forfeited estates of Monterci; and this epistle informed him that his Majesty had been by no means satisfied with the proofs of Mademoiselle de Monterci's claims, and had even hinted a design of confining her to a convent for life.

This news filled the mind of the Marquis with astonishment and consternation, and he instantly set about devising how to shield Adelaide from the power of the King, should he persist in his wish of confining her. After a short consultation with Bionville, the Marquis settled that Adelaide should be conveyed to a remote and lonely house belonging to the Chevalier, and situated amid the wildest recesses of the Cevennes, where she would be effectually concealed. But in the execution of this plan, it was essential to its success that Madame de Beauvais should assist. She, however,

however, presented no obstacle to the affair: on the contrary, when consulted on the occasion, she even promised to ensure its success, by taking Adelaide to a remote inn, from whence she might be easily carried off, while a report of her having eloped with a lover from the protection of that lady, would exonerate the Marquis from any share in her disappearance.

By the advice of Bionville, the miserable seduced Nannette was now fixed upon as a fit attendant on Adelaide, in the dreary solitude to which she was to have been conveyed. But as they did not think it right to send her to the lone house till Adelaide was already there, the girl was sent to the Chateau de Beauvais, there to await being conveyed where she was intended to go.

The anxiety which the Marquis felt for the fate of Adelaide induced him to resolve on taking her off from the inn himself, and, with his confidential servant, he set off in disguise for the inn, where, by a fictitious tale, and high bribery, he soon drew

drew the hostess into his interest; and she conceiving him to be a favoured lover of the young lady's, whom she was to expect, promised him every assistance in taking her off; in which project he would have succeeded, had not the faithful sagacious animal arrived in time to disappoint him, by attacking him so roughly, as to render him incapable of putting his plan into execution, and compelling him to retreat. There was now no alternative but to suffer Adelaide to proceed to the chateau, and to run the hazard of her being arrested by a *lettre de cachet*. But from every fear of this nature, the Marquis was effectually relieved on the morning after he had joined the party at the chateau, by the arrival of a courier, whom he had dispatched from the castle to his friend in Paris, with papers of importance, having ordered the man to return to the Chateau de Beauvais.

The courier brought back a letter, containing the pleasing intelligence that the King was at length satisfied with the proofs

of

of Mademoiselle de Monterci's descent, and had agreed to restore her honours and estates, and was impatient to behold her, as soon as she should have become the wife of the Marquis, who had not omitted to solicit permission to wed her. St. Viviers assurances to Adelaide, that he had himself knelt at the monarch's feet, and entreated her hand, were, however, false; for he had been particularly careful to avoid every thing in the affair that could afterwards militate against himself.

As circumstances had turned out, he now rejoiced that he had not succeeded in taking her to the Cevennes, and he turned all his thoughts to the speedy accomplishment of his present projects; but he had nearly lost all the fruits of his artful labours, by the near escape Adelaide had made from the chateau of Madame de Ferroillet, with the agent employed by the good Abbess of Santa Catherina.

Ever surrounded by spies, however, as Adelaide really was in the chateau, the Marquis

Marquis had no difficulty in instantly discovering her attempted flight; and now aware that she must have some secret friend who might still succeed in taking her out of his power, should she be suffered to remain in the gay residence of Madame de Beauvais, he resolved on taking her immediately back to St. Viviers castle; and this plan he successfully executed, on overtaking and forcing her from the protection of the stranger.

The awful horrors of St. Viviers castle, however, made him most eager to hasten the marriage, that he might leave the place. In vain had he essayed every art for the detection of those whom he imagined were practising the vilest illusions, to terrify him from his intended nuptials; for that artifice was the foundation of these mysteries, he was always firmly persuaded, through the day, although his opinions constantly wavered towards night, when a pale and ghastly figure, resembling his late wife, but too frequently presented itself to his

his amazed view, and as constantly warned him that his marriage with Adelaide would prove his destruction. This marriage, however, had passed over, without these mysterious predictions having been verified; of course the Marquis no longer attached any consequence to such warnings, though he trembled at the idea of again seeing the horrible figure, which had indeed seemed to prove its ærial nature, by the power it possessed of eluding every art employed to ascertain what it really was.—The constant repetition of such appearances could not, however, fail of making a deep impression on the Marquis, and, in one of his religious fits, he had suspended crucifixes and relics from his neck, and had had his apartments filled with images of the saints; but notwithstanding all this, there was something so strangely callous in his nature, that he could not be induced to relinquish his designs on Adelaide, although he suffered every thing which fear could inflict, while accomplishing his views; in the

the success of which he had at length apparent reason to exult; and, after the Count had departed, he looked forward to the following day, for the full completion of all his wishes, in anticipating the happiness he should enjoy in the smiles of the now yielding Adelaide.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

WHILE the Marquis was thus indulging the sanguine hopes, which filled his imagination with scenes of inexhaustible delights, the unhappy object of his passion trembled on the brink of despair; agitated by the wildest fears for the Count's safety, and with torturing anxiety awaiting the arrival of the billet which the Marquis had assured her she would receive from the Count when he was a few miles from the castle. The night was passed by her in such a state of mind as her situation would naturally produce, in alternate hours of devotion and tears. The morning brought no relief to her cares; for scarcely had she risen

risen from her uneasy pillow, than Madame de Beauvais visited her, with the terrific intelligence that the Marquis intended privately celebrating their nuptials that night, and expected that she would not refuse to grace, by her presence, the little banquet he meant to partake of in the Western hall.

"The Marquis then expects some guests," said Adelaide, with a degree of interest which surprised Madame de Beauvais, who now cast on the lovely maid a most penetrating look, and said—

"Do you wish strangers to be present, Madame le Marquise?"

"To whom else should the Marquis give a banquet?" articulated Adelaide, in a tone of doubt and anxiety.

"The Marquis does not consider the presence of strangers as necessary, to induce him to honour his union with you as much as the nature of circumstances will permit. As you will probably leave this gloomy castle on the day after to-morrow,

it

it would not be convenient to invite a throng of company. The Marquis has purchased an elegant chateau not far from Paris, and it is there that your nuptials will be publicly celebrated as they ought to be."

A deathlike paleness now marked the countenance of Adelaide, as she faintly said—"I cannot leave the castle so soon; nor am I sufficiently well to attend this banquet. Inform the Marquis, Madam, that I cannot see him for some days."

Adelaide sunk on the sofa, as if over come by some secret and powerful emotion. The subtle Madame de Beauvais observed her for a few moments in silent scrutiny, but at length said—"Well, I could not have conceived that you, my young friend, was possessed of so much finesse, as it is now evident you have practised on the Marquis; but suffer me to warn you, that if you have any hope of evading the compliance with his wishes, which you yesterday affected, that you are

deceiving yourself; and, as a friend of St. Viviers, I shall consider myself under an obligation to inform him that all indulgent delays on his part must tend only to his own disappointment."

She moved towards the door, when a faint shriek from Adelaide called her back. The pale and trembling victim threw herself on her knees, and convulsively grasping the hand of Madame de Beauvais, implored her, in accents of heart-rending supplication, to prevail on the Marquis to defer seeing her for a few days.

"Oh spare me, spare me," she cried;—"turn not from the prayer of the innocent oppressed, as you hope that your own prayers may be heard in the hour of distress."

"Impossible—I cannot listen to you, without decreeing my own ruin," answered Madame de Beauvais, in a voice which betrayed extreme agitation, while struggling to free herself from the grasp of Adelaide,

who,

who, still kneeling at her feet, hung on her robe, in an agony of fear.—" But three days—but two," she almost shrieked.

" It is in vain—it is in vain; you have been your own ensnarer, and must now submit to the fate which your deception has fixed. It is evident that you hope, from delay, to effect the utter destruction of the Marquis, and whatever friends may have coincided with his views; therefore our own security depends on the firmness with which you are compelled to hold to your agreement.—You have promised the Marquis to be wholly his; and I repeat, that self-preservation will compel us to make you adhere to your promise. Desist, then, and reconcile yourself to meet the Marquis with the smiles and tenderness of a bride."

Madame de Beauvais now forced herself from the hold of Adelaide, and hastened from the chamber, while the latter sunk insensible on the floor.

When she revived, she found herself on the couch, with Marcella lamenting over

her, and soon distinguished, amid the complainings of the ancient attendant, that she had a billet to deliver to her from the Marquis; it contained only a few lines, requesting permission to see her. Adelaide would not look at it. However, a few minutes only elapsed, when the Marquis entered the room, his demeanour and looks fully evincing that Madame de Beauvais had acquainted him with what had just passed between herself and Adelaide, who now, on perceiving him, made an effort to leave the room, but was quickly detained by the Marquis, who, leading her back to the sofa, said—"Unjust and cruel Adelaide! what I have just learned is then indeed too true.—You have attempted to deceive me, and your affected acquiescence to my fond hopes has been but an artful lure to draw me to my ruin. Mistaken Adelaide, what could you hope from this disgraceful deception? not to elude the just claims of a husband, certainly: for although I might have granted some indulgences to your caprice,

price, yet the result must have been, that I would never have yielded my right to your affections. I have complied with your demands. St. Croix is at liberty, and I can no longer delay presenting you to my King and the world as my bride. Dismiss these unjustifiable whims, and assume that conduct which your duty enjoins, and my ardent adoration of you merits. I still court your smiles, my lovely Adelaide.—I would be the most grateful and transported of lovers. Oh! force me not to be the irritated and offended husband."

"Never, never will I acknowledge such false—such usurped claims," said Adelaide, while indignation conquered, in some degree, her fears.—"The ceremony which that mercenary priest pronounced, was in despite of my shrieks and opposition. My lips, my heart, assented not to that detested act; and I will welcome death a thousand times, ere I will yield to thy unlicensed power."

The Marquis grasped her trembling

hand; and, in a tone which betrayed the most malignant malice, slowly muttered—"Then St. Croix dies!"

Adelaide quickly turned, and her eager anxious eyes read in his darkened countenance all that sullen jealousy and determined revenge could express.—"Dies!" she faintly articulated.

"Ay, he dies, deceptive and ungrateful," he said, while his lowering brow and angry eyes evinced the rising tempest of evil passions which struggled in his breast. "Couldst thou suppose that I was thy dupe? poor child.—No, I read in thy unpractised eye the intent of thy heart, and have provided against this artifice, by still retaining my power over thy detested minion. And now learn why I affected a blindness to thy views. I would have owed thy affections to thy gratitude—I would have cherished the idea that thou couldst not have been so quickly mine, had thy love for St. Croix been irremoveable, and I should then have been blessed in the illusive

sive hope of soon possessing thy heart.—But that fascinating vision is not realized.—And now assure thyself, that if thou dost not meet me as my acknowledged bride this night, St. Croix shall never more behold the morning light. I have already plunged too deep into guilt to obtain you; and, after what I have hazarded, I will not recede. The life of the Count is therefore at your own disposal."

The Marquis now rushed from the room, leaving Adelaide plunged into a state of the utmost horror and distraction, by his well dissembled boasts of having the Count still in his power.

Marcella, who had been an attentive and terrified listener to this scene, now entered the room, where Adelaide, extended on the couch, lay motionless. The trembling old woman raised her, and made her swallow a small quantity of cordial, which raised the sufferer to a more acute sense of her woes.

"Oh, my dear young lady," cried poor Marcella, "this is indeed a terrible affair;

and if it is possible for you to endure the Marquis, you had better confess yourself his bride at once, than suffer the dear young Count, who, the saints guard us, I find is still living, to be murdered in such a terrible way. Oh, you don't know what my Lord has the heart to do, when once he takes it into his head. Why, he will think no more of putting the Count out of the way, than he would of killing a fly; and so you had better make up your mind to what cannot be helped, and have the satisfaction of knowing that you saved your own dear true lover's life."

The miserable Adelaide was not in a state of mind to pay much attention to the well-meant advice of Marcella; but certainly her own ideas but too well coincided with those of the old woman. That the Marquis would find means to effect such a crime, and also to conceal it, she had but too much reason to fear, when she reflected on the fate of the Durancys, a crime so long and so successfully concealed. The idea of being

being the wife of the Marquis shivered her soul with horror, and yet no alternative now remained. A few hours only, and she must decide.

A faint and indistinct hope urged her to again attempt delaying this dreadful hour; and with trembling hand she traced a few lines, entreating the Marquis to allow her but two days to endeavour to reconcile her mind to a submission to his wishes. Alas! in a short time she received the following reply:—

"Deceitful Adelaide! you cannot—ought not, to require a moment's delay to reconcile you to your duties. Suffer me to lead you to the banquet this night, or the result of your refusal shall be such as you merit. I am fixed in my resolves beyond the power of fate to alter.

"St. Viviers."

The paper dropped from her nerveless hand; she gasped for breath; and the icy chill of despondence seemed to freeze all her faculties.

Confounded and overwhelmed by this heavy blow, Adelaide lost all hope, and, with a sort of despairing resignation, awaited her fate.

Towards the close of the evening, Madame de Beauvais and Madame Villette entered the apartments, where they found the unfortunate victim sitting on a sofa, with her hands clasped on her bosom, her cheeks pale, her eyes fixed, and her whole appearance denoting the weight of her sorrow.—Both addressed her—she replied not, but by turning from them in shuddering horror.

A bridal dress of white, and a profusion of jewels, were exhibited to her view. She fixed her eyes on them in vacancy.

The abominable beings who displayed these articles separately expatiated on the elegance and beauty of the dress and ornaments,

ments, and entreated her to suffer herself to be arrayed in them.

Indescribable horror now pervaded the heart of the lovely afflicted, and an universal trembling seized her frame, as these women approached, to adorn her for the celebration of those nuptials, into which she had been so barbarously and illegally forced; but the dread she suffered for the life of St. Croix, impelled her to submit to a sacrifice which she well knew would soon deprive her of life.

Madame de Beauvais, while a pang of remorse once more thrilled through her callous bosom, began to direct Madame Villette in the adjustment of the beautiful tresses of Adelaide, who, pale and inanimate, suffered them to attire her in the splendid garments of bridal festivity; while her fixed features betrayed all of despair, grief, and horror.

Insensible to the entreaties and flatteries of the despicable Villette, who was near her, she sunk on a sofa, while Madame de

Beauvais flew to inform the anxious Marquis how patiently she had submitted to be adorned.

Pleasure sparkled in his eyes, and exultation hung on his lips, on receiving this intelligence. He would have hastened with precipitation to the apartment of the charming bride, had not Madame de Beauvais, by her account of the looks of Adelaide, deterred him. Checked in his triumph, mortified and chagrined, he attempted not to venture near the apartment of his hapless victim, till a servant informed him that it was ten o'clock, and that the Western hall had been for some time illuminated.

Starting up, he now proceeded with Madame de Beauvais to conduct the unhappy Adelaide to the banquet, and, as he was ascending the grand staircase, he was met by Bionville, who said he had but just entered the castle, and then asked him what success he continued to have with his young bride?

The

The Marquis acquainted his friend with Adelaide's having permitted herself to be arrayed in her bridal dress.

"Oh, then there is nothing more to fear," said Bionville, with a sneering smile;—"when once a female attends to her dress in such circumstances, there is little more caprice to be expected from her."

Gratified by this opinion, the Marquis made some trifling reply, and proceeded with Madame de Beauvais to the apartments of Adelaide, while his friend crossed the great hall, and moved towards the passage leading to the Western hall.

The Marquis found Adelaide sitting in a state of apparent inanity on the sofa.—He was, for a moment, shocked; but quickly recovering from this sensation, and but too soon alive only to the selfish feelings of his base heart, he threw himself at the feet of the unfortunate object of his passion, and uttering a thousand expressions of ardent affection, endeavoured to gain her attention; and, in some degree, he succeeded;

ceeded; for she fixed her eyes on him with a look of such unutterable woe, that he became so confused, enraged, and distressed, that he soon lost the power of continuing his rhapsody, and rising suddenly, took her hand, and stammered a request for permission to lead her to the banquet.

Adelaide attempted to rise, but the excess of her emotions had deprived her of all strength, and she was compelled to accept the support of Madame de Beauvais, for she shrunk from the Marquis with an air of such unfeigned disgust and terror, that, mortified by her repulsive manner, he resigned her partly to the attentions of Madame de Beauvais. All the passages and galleries of the castle, except the Eastern gallery, the door of which was now nailed up, were brilliantly illuminated; but the dead silence which reigned around formed a most striking and singular contrast to the blaze of light.

As they slowly proceeded along the corridor leading to the grand staircase, the

Marquis

Marquis softly said to Adelaide—" Remember, that the least intimation of compulsion, breathed in the presence of my servants, will exonerate me from my promise respecting the liberty and life of St. Croix."

Adelaide trembled—cold was her bosom with the chill of despair, and the silence of fear sat on her lips—she drooped her lovely head, and her languid pace told the grief of her heart. They descended into the great hall. Here almost all the domestics of the castle were assembled, and their shouts of joy echoed around the lofty roofs.

Adelaide raised her blue eyes, and threw on the assembled throng a look, wild and beseeching. All who beheld her glance seemed to understand her appeal. They pitied and wondered, but they trembled at the hand of power; and again the shout of " Health and felicity to the Marquis St. Viviers and his beautiful bride" resounded along the halls and vaulted avenues.

The

The Marquis led the lovely maid to the folding entrance-door of the Western hall; the arched leaves fell back as they approached, and a strain of music instantly rose from the orchestra.

Hope recalled all the animation of Adelaide; but the voice of the Marquis sternly whispered in her ears—"Remember, that at thy least word, thy lover bleeds;" and again terror and despondence enchained her faculties.

They entered the banqueting hall. All here was splendour and magnificence; but the solitary grandeur of the scene made it appear like the fabled dwellings of enchantment, when invisible music is heard; for the musicians, concealed behind the high gilt railing of the elevated orchestra, seemed to sound their dulcet notes in the air. Innumerable waxen tapers, in lustres of varied-coloured glass, depended from the arched roof, and, from between the gothic pillars, diffused around a clear and brilliant light, which fully displayed the polish

polish of the black marble pillars, and the chequered pavement, which the rich shades of the orange and silver curtains, the furniture correspondent, and the large Venetian mirrors combined, formed a singular and impressive appearance. At the upper end of the hall, exactly opposite the distant folding doors and orchestra, was a table, highly decorated, and displaying every luxury which could please the eye, and tempt the palate of an epicure, while a profusion of the choicest wines sparkled amid the rich and massy plate, which glittered on the sideboards.

For a few minutes, the anxious eyes of Adelaide wandered around this scene, to catch the hoped-for view of some strangers; but, alas! no figures were seen in the vast hall but those of the gaudily habited attendants in waiting, and the usual guests.—Now indeed her heart sunk, and, in a state nearly approaching to unconsciousness, she was led to the head of the table, looking

more

more like the victim of death than the youthful bride.

Vain were now the efforts of St. Viviers to induce her to do the honours of this repast, till leaving his own seat, he placed himself beside her, and once more whispering his awe-inspiring threat, recalled her, in some degree, from the lethargy of woe which overwhelmed her senses—But she had no power of exertion. She raised her eyes to his face with a look of horror and fear; and he became so apprehensive that the musicians might but too much notice her despair, that he ordered them to be dismissed; and when they were gone, presided at the table himself, murmuring the severest reproaches at Adelaide, who, in one glance, had beheld the company ranged round the table, and had lost every shadow of hope.

Madame de Beauvais, Bionville, and the Villettes, talked loud, and endeavoured to assist the Marquis in his attempts to introduce

duce something like gaiety at the profusely spread board; but the Father Bertrand, who was also present, seemed so gloomy and absorbed, that his looks were inimical to the appearance of joy; nor did he seem to possess courage to raise his eyes, even for a moment, to the lovely being whose glance had reproached him as the author of her ruin.

Relinquishing all attempts to induce Adelaide to partake of the varied delicacies which were spread on the table, and inwardly enraged at her unconquerable misery, the Marquis applied so frequently to the sparkling goblet, that at length his spirits were animated to the highest tone of frantic revelry; and when supper was removed, and the servants withdrawn, he, while his guests conversed apart, addressed Adelaide in a strain of such wildly impassioned ardour, that the excess of her disgust and despair almost deprived her of the small share of recollection which grief had left her. Incoherent and wandering in his language,

language, he urged her not to drive him to utter madness, by her insensibility and coolness; and was at length attempting to clasp her to his bosom, when she suddenly started back, and intervening between them appeared a blood-stained hand, whose motion repulsed him, and vanished ere the eye could scarcely catch a glance of the frightful object.

Turning quickly towards the table, he loudly demanded whether any of his guests had beheld the visionary hand? All looked dismayed and astonished; but ere any one could reply, the great bell of the castle tolled heavily, and a cry so loud and piercing resounded through the hall, that even inebriation could not repress the consternation and awe which it inspired, while a thick vapour suddenly dimmed the brilliant lights, and scarcely left the now livid flame perceptible. Again the bell sounded a long and heavy note. The Marquis started up—he gazed wildly around—the oppressive mist seemed to breathe suffocation, and

all

all present, except himself, appeared to be deprived of power to move, while the pale hue of terror seemed to impress their features with the "characters of death."

"Confusion and ruin!" exclaimed the Marquis, with increased wildness of manner; "ruin seize me, if even this shall drive me from my purpose;" and instantly swallowing the contents of a full goblet of wine, which stood near him on the table, he once more turned towards Adelaide, when again the thrilling cry was heard, and a demoniac laugh followed, while a hollow, yet pierceing voice, exclaimed—"It is thy last draught, St Viviers—it is thy last! and the now unerring revenge of Elvira de Dumont is accomplished!"—and instantly appeared at the opposite end of the table, with eyes flashing malignant exultation, and arrayed in the grey habit of her order, the Nun of Miserecordia!

"I am murdered—I am poisoned!" frantically

tically cried the miserable St. Viviers, and, with a ghastly stare fixed on his destroyer, he sunk back in severe agonies.

Bionville flew to his assistance, while the Father Bertrand had not power to move; and the Villettes shrunk down in all the terrors of guilt, which fears discovery.—Madame de Beauvais, almost senseless, fell on the marble pavement, wildly shrieking—"Elvira! my sister!"

The ghastly hollow eyes of the nun now turned fiercely on the fallen Theresa, and rapidly seizing her arm, and half-raising the scarcely conscious woman, she exclaimed—"Sister!—sister, sayest thou? And art *thou* Theresa? Art thou she whom my imagination, and thy hypocrite seducer's assertion, had decked in the holy veil of penitence, and shrouded with the garb of death? Art *thou* Theresa? Thou art.—Go, then, detested wretch," she added, spurning her to the ground—"Go, thou associate of thy sister's destroyer;—fly from my presence, lest

lest my rage inflicts on thee the punishment thy most abominable insensibility deserves —Begone!"

"Oh, spurn me not away, when at this dreadful hour I am awakened to the sense of my guilt!—Oh! let the softness of a truly contrite heart be thine, also, my sister, and let us weep together those enormities we have each committed.—But oh! believe me I am innocent of having known that St. Viviers was thy seducer; nor have I, to my knowledge, beheld the man with whom I left the paths of virtue, since the hour in which he quitted me at Lisbon."

Theresa paused. At this moment the Marquis, recovering from the paroxysm which had seized him, loudly cried—"Secure my murderer!—Revenge—revenge!—Look! Look where the fiend stands—Inflict on her those tortures which now tear my heart!—Away—away—secure her!" And again he writhed in agonies beyond endurance.

Bionville advanced towards the nun, who now stood in a fixed attitude, gazing on the dying

dying St. Viviers with looks of malicious triumph, when suddenly turning towards the Chevalier, she presented a pistol, and exclaimed—"Approach but one step nearer, thou infamous parasite, thou despicable purveyor of licentiousness, and thou diest."

The Chevalier shrunk back, enraged and terrified, and flew towards the folding doors to call for help. To his utter dismay they were fastened, and the bell string was broken away.

A sneering laugh, hollow and disgusting, distorted the features of the nun, while she cast on him a look of contempt; then turning towards the Marquis, she cried—"Revive, St. Viviers—revive and live, while I vent my just reproaches—Seducer—liar—destroyer of my innocence and fame, thou now hast the reward of thy guilt and treachery, and the prediction that hung over thy family is fulfilled.—Thy name is extinct—for the last heir of the house of St. Viviers has now fallen by the

the hand of a nun of the Order of Miserecordia."

Scarce had the nun pronounced these words, when the Marquis heaved a deep groan, and expired in a convulsion of agony.

A cry of horror was uttered by all present, except the nun, who, after gazing for one moment longer, flew towards the body.

At this moment a violent noise was heard withoutside the door, and in a few minutes it was burst open, and a number of persons rushed in, foremost of whom came St. Croix, who, soon distinguishing his Adelaide, clasped her, almost lifeless form to his bosom, and scarcely observed the dead body of the Marquis, and the consternation which reigned in the faces of those in the apartment.

The strangers, however, instantly assembled round the dead Marquis. The nun was standing near, supporting herself by leaning her hand on the back of the high

chair; her features were ghastly and convulsed, but her eyes were still bent on the deceased Marquis.

"Oh, unfortunate Elvira, wert thou preserved for this foul deed?" exclaimed one of the strangers, in a voice which reanimated all the faculties of Adelaide, for it was that of her father.

"My father! my father!" cried the lovely girl, and in the next moment she was clasped to the breast of that loved parent, but joy almost deprived her of her senses.

Quickly, however, she revived, and perceived that the present was not a moment for the expressions of amazement and transport; for the sad cries, which fast approaching death, and the suddenly awakened conviction of her own enormous guilt, now drew from the criminal Nun of Miserecordia, claimed the attention of all present.

"I murdered him," shrieked this miserable being; "but the same fires now scorch my own heart which inwardly consumed him.

him. Murder and suicide! There is no pardon—for there is no repentance for me. Abhorred Bionville!—Atheist—fool! approach and behold a guilty soul on the confines of eternity.—Theresa, miserable sister, come—come quick—haste thee, and view the death of the wicked!—Oh, mercy!—mercy!"

At this moment Madame de Beauvais wildly rushed to the spot where the nun, now extended on a couch, lay writhing in the agonies of death.

"Oh, Elvira! Oh my poor undone sister!" she cried, while horror denied her the relief of tears.

"Theresa," said the nun, in a hollow and inarticulate voice, and convulsively grasping the hand of her sister, "pray for me, Theresa—Pray for me—I cannot pray for myself.—Oh! oh, St. Viviers, glare not so horribly on me!—that infant, too, that always haunts me—Away—I come.—Did I not vow this act of revenge, and is it not done! Yes, yes—this is the triumph of the

passions—call me not so oft—I come—Oh!"

She then uttered several more indistinct expressions, and expired; while her wretched sister leaned over her corse, in the fixed attitude of torpid woe.

Several strangers, who had accompanied the Count St. Croix to the castle, now left the body of the Marquis, after ascertaining that every remains of life was fled, and assembled round the ghastly corse of the nun, humanely endeavouring to recover Madame de Beauvais from the stupor which seemed to have seized her senses, and to withdraw her from the body of her sister, whose death-cold hand was still convulsively clasped in her own; while others thronged around the Father Bertrand, who yet leaned back in his chair, without motion, and looking the wild and haggard image of despair and horror.

Meanwhile, Adelaide, scarcely retaining her senses, hid her face in the bosom of her father, who, supporting her with paternal fondness,

fondness, sought to exclude from her view the sight of horror which surrounded them; while the agitated St. Croix had scarcely power to quit her for a moment, till the recollection that it was necessary to direct the arrest of Bionville and the Villettes, compelled him to rush amid the assembled throng of strangers and domestics, in search of them. But he was now too late; for conscious of their guilt, and fearing that some punishment awaited their evil deeds, both the Chevalier and the Villettes had availed themselves of the confusion which attended the first moments of the strangers entrance, and had escaped. Some of the terrified and amazed domestics were then ordered to accompany the officers in pursuit of the fugitives. And now the attention of all present was irresistibly drawn to Father Bertrand, who had replied in the most wild and incoherent manner to the questions which had been addressed to him by several of the strangers, and at length made the lofty roof of the hall re-

sound with the most doleful lamentations, wringing his hands, and frantically accusing himself as the author of all the horrible events which had just occurred.

The renewed terrors which Adelaide now began to suffer, induced the Count, her father, to propose removing her to another apartment, to which, at his request, they were immediately conducted by a female domestic, and followed by St. Croix.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

FOR some moments, neither the Count or his daughter were able to speak; nor was St. Croix much more capable of articulating a word. In silence and agitation she was alternately clasped to the bosoms of each, and her first words were—"Oh, my father! my dear father! you are then still living, and this is no blissful illusion of my weakened intellects. I will not now enquire by what miraculous means you have been preserved, thus to bless me with your restoration. Those unhappy beings! poor Father Bertrand and Madame de Beauvais.—Oh, my father!—the commencing

reward of their crimes is awfully terrific—shall not such consolation and assistance as we can give be immediately afforded them?"

"Amiable, disinterested girl!" exclaimed her father, "you evince the goodness of your heart, by feeling for the distresses of your enemies, and by seeking their ease, at a moment when self might have been allowed to have influenced all your present feelings."

The Count now hastily quitted the room, leaving Adelaide to the care of St. Croix. But these affectionate lovers spoke not during his short absence, the excess of their emotions, on such an unexpected meeting, rendering both incapable of testifying, but by their looks, the trembling joy and hope which agitated their bosoms, and beamed in their eyes. The return of the Count gave some relief to their overwhelming feelings.

"I have fulfilled my Adelaide's humane wishes," he said.—"The miserable friar, and

and Madame de Beauvais, are instantly to be conveyed to separate apartments, and properly attended to, while the gentlemen who accompanied us hither will proceed to investigate the particulars of the horrible deed which has been perpetrated by Elvira, and to direct that the bodies of those guilty unfortunates be removed from the hall. And now, my child, my long-lost Adelaide," he added, again tenderly embracing her, " how can I ever feel sufficient gratitude to that all-gracious Power, who has permitted me once again to behold and bless thee!"

" Oh my father!" cried the lovely maid, " how can I testify my unbounded sense of the goodness of Providence, in conducting you and my St. Croix to my assistance, at that moment when ruin seemed to impend over my devoted head! Ah! behold these bridal robes, these costly gems, and conceive all the horrors of my situation."

The Count shuddered, and clasped her closer to his paternal breast, but St. Croix

was silent; a varying crimson flush, and pallid hue, alternately overspread his cheek. Adelaide perceived the internal sentiments which thus betrayed themselves. She turned more pale herself, and, with a deep sigh, sunk on the arm of her father.—The young Count had met her anxious eye. He was in a moment at her feet.

"Oh forgive me, Adelaide—forgive my mean execrable sensation of jealous feeling."

"Jealous!" articulated Adelaide, faintly raising her head; "is it possible that St. Croix could have supposed that I could have outlived this night, had not his, and a father's arm, been stretched forth to save me?—Oh, no! despair and grief would soon have broken my sad heart."

"Our arrival at such a moment was doubtless most fortunate," said the Count de Monterci; "but let not my child forget that her fate was decided ere we appeared, and that Providence had already permitted her to be relieved from the unlicensed power

power of the Marquis St. Viviers, by the avenging and cruel hand of the Nun of Miserecordia."

"But did she not accompany you hither, my father?" asked Adelaide, with evident surprise.

"Certainly not," replied the Count.—"Months have elapsed since I have, till this night, beheld that singular and unhappy being."

Adelaide, in increased amazement, now entreated that her beloved father would inform her how his life had been preserved, and of every incident which had occurred to him since their separation; but ere she had finished speaking, she recollected the horrible tale which the Marquis had told her of her beloved father's having been the seducer of Elvira, and the murderer of Garcio, and, in a tone of anxious earnestness, she mentioned their names, adding—"Surely my senses do not deceive me, for the words of the nun implied that the Marquis was the real object of her revenge."

"You are right, my child," said the Count; "the seducer of Elvira, and the murderer of her noble-minded brother, was indeed the unfortunate Marquis St. Viviers."

Adelaide clasped her trembling hands, and raised her eyes to Heaven in speechless gratitude, for having been thus relieved from the most horrible idea that her beloved father had been the guilty being which she had dreaded to have found him. Entirely subdued by this blissful conviction, and the excessive agitation she had so lately undergone, she sunk exhausted on the couch, while her father and her lover severely reproached themselves for having suffered her to agitate herself further, by conversing on such subjects, when they considered what she had lately endured, and remarked the alteration which long-suffering had caused in her once blooming and animated looks. And now all the most agonizing fears which love could inspire, were awakened in the bosom of St. Croix, for the life of his idolized Adelaide; beside whom

whom he now knelt, and, with imploring looks, fixed on her beautiful face, softly whispered entreaties for pardon for his late imprudent folly; while her father as earnestly entreated her to retire to her apartments, and there endeavour to obtain some repose; but she could not endure the thought of parting, even for a moment, from these dear objects of her tenderness, and therefore exerted her languid voice in entreaties for permission to remain.

This little contest was, however, soon interrupted, by the sudden entrance of old Jaques, before whom poor Cæsar sprung into the room, and bounding towards the couch on which Adelaide reclined, testified the wildest joy, on being again permitted to approach his mistress; while she, bending over the faithful animal, continued to shed tears of joy; she patted the head of her faithful guardian, who experienced equally the caresses of St. Croix, and at length attracted the notice of De Monterci, who had been, for a few minutes, engaged

in replying to the heart-felt and sincere gratulations and welcome of the honest old Jaques, who had flown to the apartment to behold his dear young master, whom every one had thought dead. At the first sound of the Count's voice, the dog left Adelaide and St. Croix, and, after some moments attention to the stranger, evinced, by his singular and apparent recollection of his early master, how powerful is that mysterious instinct which distinguishes some animals of his species.—While Cæsar thus received the caresses which were lavished on him, Jaques stood beholding the beloved group, with eyes dimmed with tears of joy, and a countenance strongly expressing that respect alone withheld him from presuming to enquire how he had the felicity of again being in the presence of his dear Lord and his lovely daughter.

The Count de Monterci, happening to glance his eyes on the good old man, read the feelings of his heart in his open placid countenance,

countenance, and said—"I perceive your anxious wish, my faithful Jaques, but this moment of confusion is not proper for explanation.—When composure and recollection is in some degree restored to us all, we must then explain, and endeavour to account for all these mysteries."

Jaques bowed, and expressed his gratitude for the kind condescension of his Lord; and then said, that Mademoiselle's attendant, Marcella, was waiting in the great hall, to learn whether her young lady would please to retire to her apartments that night.

"I hope I shall be pardoned for intruding this message, my Lord," added the old man; "I have presumed to think that a separation will not be pleasing; but I should ill deserve all these kind encomiums for fidelity, if I did not say that my dear young lady is half dead with sorrow and trouble, although her present joy may not let her feel it much now."

The Count and St. Croix most warmly commended

commended the sincere anxiety for Adelaide's health, which Jaques, with so much simplicity, manifested, and then dismissed him, to desire Marcella to be ready with lights to precede them to the apartments of Adelaide, whither her father now tenderly insisted upon conducting her, representing so justly the imprudence of her hazarding any further indisposition, which might eventually separate her from them for a length of time, that at last she yielded, and suffered her beloved parent and her Henry to support her to her apartments, where she was left to the care of Marcella, Cæsar taking his accustomed station in the anti-room. To describe the different sensations with which she now entered her chamber, from those which had rent her bosom when she had lately quitted it, or to say with what devout gratitude to Heaven she returned thanks for the resuscitation of her dear father, and that miraculous preservation which had restored her to indescribable bliss, would be useless; for

for every feeling mind can well conceive, what must have been her sensations in so happy a reverse of circumstances.

CHAP. IX.

WHEN the Counts returned to the saloon which they had just quitted, they found there several of the strangers that had accompanied them to the castle, and who now requested them to hasten to the apartment to which Father Bertrand had been conveyed, as he was now apparently dying, and had most earnestly requested to see them.

Monterci and St. Croix instantly followed the steps of their friends, and were conducted

conducted up the grand staircase to a large gloomy chamber, where, extended on a bed, lay Father Bertrand, still lamenting, in the most heart-felt strain of woe, the events of the night.

The moment that he beheld the Count de Monterci and his young companion, he made a feeble effort to rise, and, in a grief-fraught voice, entreated them to approach.

Both the Counts drew near to the bed-side, and separately assured the miserable father that they wished to afford him every consolation that might be in their power to bestow. Bertrand tremulously expressed much gratitude, and then requested permission to speak with them alone; adding, that what he had to reveal must not meet the ear of strangers. The three gentlemen that were present now politely withdrew, and the friar was left at liberty to commence his proposed communications. But there did not seem much probability of his being long able to speak, he appeared so much exhausted.—At length he said—"To explain

plain much of what has this night occurred, I must trouble you, Count de Monterci, with a brief narrative of my life. Say, will you have the humanity to listen to the confession of a miserable being, whose crimes have this night received their just and awful reward? for ah! I feel that the recent events have reached my heart, and will assuredly terminate my wretched existence. When I tell you, that in me you behold the Baron de Esteville, you will not have to learn, that in my altered form and features you see the remaining traces of the seducer of the Marquis St. Viviers, and the luckless murderer of Durancy."

The Count de Monterci uttered an exclamation of surprise and horror, and started back from the miserable criminal, who sunk on the bed in an agony of remorse and grief, in which he remained till his auditors, recovering from their first emotions, humanely endeavoured to soothe his tortured feelings, by expressions of forgiveness for any injury he might have done to themselves,

selves, and by reminding him that penitence is ever crowned by mercy.

The wretched friar once more raised his languid eyes, and, in faltering accents, said—"You are good—very good—very generous, Count de Monterci; my heart feels and acknowledges your unmerited kindness; nor is it the least cause for my remorse, that I endeavoured to allure you into the same paths of vice into which I had so successfully and unfortunately drawn the Marquis. Oh! you cannot but remember, that hating you for your suspicions of my guilt in the affair of Durancy, with what insidious art I revealed to you that you were not the son of the old Marquis, and informed you of your real rank and name; nor the persuasions that I made use of, to urge you to throw off all submission to the venerable man who had fulfilled to you all the duties of a real parent. Nor have I forgotten that my disappointment was extreme, when, instead of deviating from the steps of virtue, on finding that you had no natural

natural guardian to restrain your wishes, you so nobly resolved to revere the Marquis a thousand times more than you had already done; and, although the high-spirited independance which you cherished would not permit you to longer accept support from your benefactor, or suffer you to receive as your right any part of the large estates to which your cousin, Eustace St. Viviers, alone was heir, yet you determined to be guided by the Marquis as to your future plans. Alas! the good old nobleman did not long survive the shock that the discovery of your marriage gave him, and more especially your abrupt departure from the castle, which grieved him to the heart."

"How is that possible?" interrupted the Count de Monterci, "for the very evening after I had acknowledged to the Marquis my having been made acquainted with my real birth, and consequent intentions of being no longer a burden on his benefi-

cence,

cence, he sent me a letter, enclosing bills for three hundred louis, and granting me permission to leave the castle; intimating also, that, as I had married contrary to his wishes, we should never meet again without experiencing disagreeable sensations; that I had better never return to St. Viviers, nor address letters to either himself or his son. And this epistle was concluded with such a peremptory injunction to accept the bills, and such assurances, that any attempt to return them would be considered as the grossest insult I could possibly offer to my benefactor, that I was compelled, however reluctantly, to retain them, although I instantly left the castle."

"Ah!" said the friar, "that letter was not written by the Marquis; it was forged by me, to drive you from the castle: yet struck with a transient remorse for having, by my revealing to you the secret of your birth, deprived you of your only friend, and internally convinced, that, if you once quitted your home, you would never again return,

return, I dreaded that you would depart privately, without being provided against the exigencies which must occur to you on your first entrance into the world, and I therefore embraced this method of supplying you with a trifle, which I feared you would not accept from the Marquis, were he in person to offer it. But ah! these rising sentiments of virtue soon vanished from my mind, and, in a short time after your departure, I was the same depraved being you knew me. You had not been gone two months, when the old Marquis died, and Eustace now felt relieved from all restraints in the pursuits of pleasure.—After a decent period allotted to the affectation of mourning, the new Marquis and myself set off on a tour of Spain and Portugal and——"

"You may spare yourself the pain of being minute in this part of your recital, Father Bertrand," said De Monterci, as I already am informed, that, under the name of De Barre, you were the companion of the

the Marquis in the seduction of those miserable sisters, Elvira and Theresa de Dumont."

"Astonishing!" exclaimed the friar; "how learned you this so carefully concealed secret? Ah! if my guilt is so well known, who shall shield my son from infamy, and recover his birth-rights from the power of the detested Bionville?"

"I will," replied the Count, compassionately.—"Compose yourself, therefore, father; and be assured that your penitence has deeply affected me."

"Generous, exalted Monterci," murmured the Father Bertrand, "how ill have I merited such goodness!—But tell me, oh, tell me! how did you become acquainted with my conduct towards those wretched sisters?"

"The particulars of that affair were related to me by one of the servants who had attended you at the villa—by Lopez de Vego."

"I remember the man well," said the friar.—"He discovered and came to me at Paris,

Paris, and I intended to provide for him, but he suddenly quitted me, and since then I have, till this moment, been ignorant of all that related to him.—But how did he introduce himself to you, Count?"

"Accident threw him into my way," replied De Monterci.—"About five years ago, as I was one evening returning from Bayonne to my own chateau, and attended by a single servant, we perceived a most wretched-looking object lying in a ditch by the road side, and uttering most piteous moans for assistance. I ordered my servant to alight, and give some relief to the miserable mendicant, for such he appeared to be; but we soon found that he was unable to move. But suffice it to say, as I was not far from my chateau, I had him conveyed thither, and placed under the care of my house-keeper. In a few days the man was better, and I, induced by humanity, went to the room where he lay, to see him. The moment he beheld me, he was apparently seized with a shivering fit,

and, in a tone of affright, exclaimed—"It is the Chevalier de Torville."

"With the intention of convincing him that he was mistaken, I drew near the bed, and he endeavoured to conceal his face.—I expostulated, and so earnestly begged him to explain what he meant, by naming me De Torville, that, on a solemn promise of pardon, he declared, that although I might have forgotten him, he well remembered me; and then proceeded to state his having resided with me and another gentleman at Lisbon. In fact, he fully related the particulars relative to the seduction of Elvira and Theresa, and persisted in asserting, that I could be no other than the Chevalier de Torville; and then confessed that he had stolen several very valuable jewels, and a large sum of money, from me at the villa.

"This tale, you may be assured, excited in my mind the utmost amazement, and I again attempted to convince the man of his error. He looked incredulous, and said, with significance—'You may wish, Monsieur,

Monsieur, to deny all knowledge of this affair; but I can prove to you, that I do not depend on my memory alone for a perfect recollection of you;' and thus saying, he produced a small ivory box, which he put into my hand, with a sigh, adding—'This is all that remains of the valuables I purloined at the villa, and I was prevented parting with these, for fear the pictures might lead to a discovery of my villainy.'

"I opened the box, and, amid a small parcel of papers, found three miniature portraits. The first I took out explained the whole mystery to me, for it was a miniature of my supposed brother; and when I reflected on the striking resemblance between myself and the Marquis, I no longer wondered at the mistake of the man, in supposing me to have been his former master. The second portrait was an exact likeness of yourself, Father Bertrand; and, as I instantly recollected you, I was at no further loss for deciding who had been the companion of the Marquis in the seduction

of the sisters. The third picture was that of a fine young woman, and I asked the man whom it represented? 'Surely Monsieur knows that that picture is the likeness of Donna Elvira de Dumont. It was her first present to you, Monsieur, and you in return gave her a very beautiful diamond ring, which I wished to make my own, but she was too careful of that.'

"Lopez de Vego now described the ring, and, by the setting, I was soon convinced that it had indeed been given her by the Marquis, as I perfectly remembered his having had such a ring. And now, although I acknowledged that I had much about the same period been in Portugal, I once more attempted to convince Lopez that I was not in reality the person he imagined me to be, but acknowledged that I knew the gentleman for whom he had taken me. At length the man seemed to be convinced, and, in reply to my questions respecting the fate of the deserted sisters, he told me that one had been taken away, but no one knew whither,

whither, by her brother, and that the other had entered a convent of nuns, of the Order of Miserecordia, after having, with her own hands, destroyed her infant son, and sworn a horrible oath of revenge on her seducer, should she ever discover him.

'It was in the midst of the confusion,' said Lopez, 'that I scraped together every valuable that I could find, and made off with them from the villa, but I learned what had become of the ladies before I left Lisbon. I proceeded to Paris, Monsieur,' continued Lopez, 'thinking that city the best place to make a fortune in, by disposing of the stolen jewels; but I had not been there a day before I met the Chevalier de Barre, and then I thought what a fool I was, in running into the midst of danger, as both the Chevaliers were Frenchmen. So I told the Chevalier de Barre what had become of the ladies, and then made off as fast as I could, and soon quitted France.' Lopez then gave a brief

account of his travels and losses, till his accidental meeting with me.

"The man had scarcely brought his little narrative to a conclusion, when I, perceiving him almost exhausted, left him to compose himself alone, and retiring to my own chamber, began to examine the papers contained in the small ivory box.—They were letters which had passed between the Marquis and Elvira. Judge of my surprise and anger, when I found one written in all the fervour of passion, wherein the treacherous Marquis avowed to the deluded object of his deceit, that his real name was Louis St. Viviers, younger son to the Marquis St. Viviers, of Dauphiny; that he had quitted his home on account of a family quarrel, but that, as soon as he should be reconciled to his father, he would take her to France, and make her his wife. Thus you perceive that the Marquis, by a cruel and artful device, affixed all the odium of his own crime on my supposed name,

and

and had no doubt premeditated the desertion of the unfortunate Elvira, as he took such pains to avoid detection."

"This is most true," observed Father Bertrand; "such was indeed St. Viviers' intention; and, with remorse and shame I confess, that it was with my acquiescence that he called himself Louis; for I imagined that you would never return to Dauphiny; and as we both, especially the Marquis, dreaded the vengeance of Elvira's brother, we supposed, that by leading her to believe that Louis had been her seducer, we might avoid detection and trouble; and indeed your singularly extreme likeness to the Marquis promised, in case of discovery, to aid our deception. But oh, this very presumption, by the justice of Heaven, laid the foundation of all the horrible events which Elvira has accomplished; for had she never heard the name of St. Viviers, all might have been prevented."

"You have doubtless heard of her attack upon me at Lisbon, father?"

"Attack! what attack?" cried the friar, evincing, by his unfeigned amazement, that he was still a stranger to that event.

The Count now related every particular of her visit to him at Lisbon; when he had concluded, the friar said to St. Croix—"Ah! why did you not inform me of this circumstance?"

"Because the Marquis, when I had discovered Garcio's remains in the vault, artfully persuaded me that the Count was in reality guilty of the seduction of Elvira, and her brother's murder, and I did not chuse to proclaim his crimes."

"By my ignorance of this event, I have been led to aid Elvira's recent plans; but how it happened I will inform you in the course of my narrative," said the friar:—"but may I enquire what became of Lopez, and whether you undeceived the frantic Elvira as to your having been her seducer?"

"In reply to your first question," said the Count, "I must inform you that Lopez died at my chateau; and as to the means

by

by which Elvira discovered who was really her seducer, I am ignorant: from me, however, she did not receive any information on the subject; for during the first moments of our short interview, I was so confounded, by her mistaking me as the object of her revenge, that I had not power to attempt convincing her that I imagined she had been drawn into an error by my great resemblance to the Marquis; and when I was recovering my recollection, the stroke of her dagger put an end to all hopes of explanation. And even after she had wounded me, I permitted her to escape, in the hope that she would rest satisfied with the vengeance which she would suppose she had accomplished on her seducer, and thus be excluded from the wish of perpetrating any further mischief.

"In this idea, however, I find I have been most fatally deceived. But the troubles I have suffered since that period had almost banished the Nun of Misere-

cordia from my mind, till I beheld her here.

"On the morning after I had been wounded by the nun, I was on the point of examining some of the letters which had passed between her and the Marquis, and was just opening the ivory box with that intent, when the dreadful convulsion of nature, which has ruined Lisbon, occurred. But here my memory almost fails. I but barely recollect that the horror I experienced for my Adelaide's fate was the most intense agony. From that moment, I lost all recollection. On the first dawn of returning reason, I found I was in a cave, alone, and stretched on a bed, in an obscure recess, dimly lighted by one lamp. My cry brought assistance. A rough-looking, athletic figure approached my bedside, and, in a voice of kindness, addressed me. I wildly enquired where I was—But I need not be minute on this subject; suffice it to say, that I soon found I was in a cave

cave of robbers, and that I had been brought thither in a smuggling vessel, the master of which had been influenced by gratitude and humanity, to make every effort to save my life. The moment I saw this man, I recognized in him a person to whom I had rendered an essential service in Lisbon. He had been taken up for a robbery about three days before the earthquake. The robbery had been committed in the house of the nobleman with whom I resided, and from my having accidentally caught a glimpse of the robber in his retreat, I was enabled to vouch that the smuggler was innocent, as he by no means resembled the man whom I had seen.

"When my first agonized recollections respecting my Adelaide had been in some degree abated, I learned from the humane smuggler, who, however, gave me the relation in a very confused manner, that he had found me lying lifeless amongst a heap of ruins; and, on instantly recollecting me, had me conveyed some miles from the

town, and put on board his vessel, which lay in a retired creek, beyond the castle of Belem. No sooner had I been brought on board the vessel, than every method to recover me had been tried, and at length these efforts had succeeded, but my intellects seemed to be totally deranged. One of my arms had been broken—my wound was in a bad state, and I was altogether in so dangerous a way, that several weeks had elapsed before my preserver could entertain the least hope of my recovery.

"As soon as I became sensible of my situation, I entreated my rough benefactor to make every possible enquiry at Lisbon respecting my daughter and her lover; for I was myself utterly incapable of any exertion, being still unable to turn in my bed. In a few days, I learned that my Adelaide had escaped all the horrors of that dreadful day at Lisbon, and had accompanied the Count St. Croix to France, and that she was safe under the protection of

her uncle, the Marquis St. Viviers, in Dauphiny. I now proposed writing to my beloved child, but to this my smuggler friend could not agree, arguing in his defence, for refusing me liberty to do so, that I was in a cave belonging to men who were his friends, and who would run the risk of utter ruin, by any discovery of their retreat; and as that must inevitably happen if I were to write to my daughter or my friends, I must, of course, content myself with remaining silent, till I should be able to travel, when I would be at liberty to go, as he thought they could rely on my honour and gratitude not to betray them. In vain now were all my remonstrances, entreaties, promises, and prayers. I was compelled to submit; for the smuggler would not run the hazard of betraying his friends. And now I soon began to rejoice that Adelaide was unacquainted with my being still alive, as the anxiety of my mind so often threw me on the brink of the grave, that I almost imagined it would be cruel to inform her that I lived,

I lived, when I was in daily expectation of death. Months rolled away, and still I lingered between life and death; but still I was attended with all the care that my situation would permit. One of the robbers, a very young man, who was secretly much averse to a mode of life into which misfortune had driven him, was almost my constant attendant; and, after a long interval, I began to cherish hopes of gaining his confidence, and of making him the instrument of my designs. The disgust to a robber's life, and the fear of an ignominious death, in the mind of the young man, aided my persuasions, and I prevailed upon him to send off a letter for me to France; and this letter was addressed to my private agent at Bayonne, to whom I revealed my situation, and demanded his assistance in my liberation; at the same time enjoining him by no means to write either to the Marquis St. Viviers, or my daughter, that I lived, as my health was still in so precarious a state, that I was not certain that I could long survive, and therefore did not chuse to hazard

hazard awakening hopes in the bosom of my child and her lover, which might ultimately end in grievous disappointment.—M. le Luc strictly obeyed my direction, and in due time I received an answer from him, assuring me that I should soon be liberated from my unpleasant confinement.

"When he arrived, which he did in about a fortnight afterwards, he entered the hut, attended by a large party of troops; but none of the robbers, who were only five in number, my friendly one not included, as he never stirred abroad, were taken, as they happened to be out of the way when M. le Luc and the soldiers arrived.

"I was now, with Ranvirez, the name of my robber, removed from the hut, and, with much difficulty, conveyed to France; but alas! the very moment we landed at St. Jean de Luz, I received another accidental hurt in my arm, which confined me again to my bed. However, I dispatched Le Luc with a letter into Dauphiny, and, after a most distressing delay of above a fortnight,

fortnight, he returned with intelligence that the Marquis St. Viviers had quitted his castle, accompanied by his niece, and a Madame de Beauvais, for the chateau of that lady, which was situate not far from Tarbes. To this chateau Le Luc again set off; but on reaching it, was peremptorily denied an interview with my daughter; and from some hints, which he gleaned from one of the servants, he found, that if he delivered his letter to any one but herself, she would never receive it. Irresolute how to act, Le Luc proceeded to Bayonne, and wrote from thence to me for instructions. But he had not been arrived at his house above an hour, when he received a letter from the Abbess of Santa Catherina, a convent situated at no great distance from the castle of St. Croix, the residence of my dear young friend, the Count; and, as this letter informed him that the business on which the Abbess wished to see him related entirely to Mademoiselle St. Viviers, Le Luc of course hastened

hastened thither immediately. On arriving at the convent, he learned the real situation of my daughter, the death of her lover, and the resolve of the Marquis to compel her into a marriage with himself; and that he had likewise proved her to be the daughter of the Count de Monterci. Le Luc could not doubt the veracity of this account, for I had many years back confided to him who I really was; and he perceived that it would be much better to withdraw my daughter by a stratagem from the power of the Marquis, than to involve me in a long, and perhaps dangerous quarrel, with so unprincipled a man. In this idea he was also encouraged and supported by the good Abbess. But alas! this little plot failed; and Le Luc, after having carried off Adelaide, was pursued. She was taken from him, and the poor fellow was left, desperately wounded, to feel all the agonies of disappointment. A pistol ball had perforated his right shoulder, and he could not hold a pen: nor was this all;

for

for the anxiety of his mind soon threw him into such a feverish state, that his life was for many days despaired of, and some weeks elapsed ere he was in the least degree recovered. At length, after experiencing the utmost uneasiness and terror which a parent could endure, I received a letter from the Abbess of Santa Catherina, cautiously informing me of my daughter's situation, and the disasters of Le Luc, and containing offers of assistance in any measure I should think proper to pursue, in order to recover my child. This letter threw me into a relapse, from which I very narrowly escaped with life; but the moment I could hold a pen, I wrote to St. Viviers, commanding him to restore me my daughter, unless he wished me to have recourse to the laws of my country for redress. Judge my surprise, on receiving a most speciously kind and polite reply, informing me that my Adelaide was then too much indisposed to be able to travel, but that she had been made acquainted with my

my being still in existence, and was most tenderly impatient to behold me. Enclosed was a letter, which I then supposed to have been written by my dear girl herself; for it was so excellent a forgery, that even I could not detect its fallacy, although I was astonished at finding it half filled with encomiums on the Marquis, and a timid request for permission to give him her hand. She then proceeded to regret that the ardent passion of the Marquis had induced him to pursue and take her from M. le Luc, who, however, had not declared that he intended carrying her to the arms of her dear father, as was doubtless his intention; for, had the Marquis been informed of such a design, he would himself have instantly conducted her to my arms.

"The death of the Count St. Croix was now delicately touched upon; and indeed the whole style of the letter, except in the instance of asking permission to wed the Marquis, was so exactly resembling that of my Adelaide, that I could not avoid giving full

full credit to it, although I was utterly confounded, by the contradictory account from the Abbess of Santa Catherina. However, I could only conclude that the good Abbess was in an error; and under this idea, I wrote back to the Marquis and Adelaide, informing both that I would be at the castle in a short time, and should, on my arrival, pay attention to the projected union. In this, however, I used some evasion; for I was determined that Adelaide should never give her hand to such a man as the Marquis.

"I now set out to travel by easy stages into Dauphiny, but my health would not permit me to travel every day; and these unavoidable delays greatly retarded my proceeding; but thank Heaven I arrived in time, although I had nearly been thrown into a sick-bed again, by my accidentally meeting the Count St. Croix in an inn at Grenoble. I scarcely need mention my amazement, on beholding this dear youth, whom I had mourned as dead; but it would be

be impossible to describe the least part of what I felt, when he unfolded to me a tale, which but too well proved that I was the most credulous of dupes, and that my Adelaide was indeed suffering the most singular and dreadful persecutions. Suffice it to say, that I instantly called in the assistance of the Magistrates at Grenoble, and, with the Count St. Croix, hastened hither, where, you are not to learn, father, that I arrived in a most critical moment."

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

FOR some minutes after the Count had concluded his little narrative, the friar did not reply; but at length he said—"Your relation, Count de Monterci, most fully evinces the superintending care of Providence. Alas! mine will as certainly prove the justice of that all-wise Power, who frequently makes the guilty their own chastisers. During your narrative, Count, you have never once mentioned the fate of the unfortunate Garcio, the brother of those ruined sisters."

"My silence on that horrible subject, father, proceeded from a wish of not irritating your feelings."

"You

"You are then acquainted with his fate?" said Father Bertrand.

"I have been informed by the Count St. Croix that the remains of Don Garcio lie mouldering in a vault beneath the castle, and of the infamous attempt to affix the guilt of that deed on me; but I am still unacquainted with the manner of his death, although I am assured that he fell by the hand of St. Viviers. Is it not so?"

"It is," replied the friar, with a deep groan, while the cold damps of death seemed to overspread his features.

Affected by the sad state of this wretched man, the Count de Monterci presented him a glass of wine from a decanter on the table; and having swallowed a small portion of it himself, and perceived that the friar was much revived by the salutary draught, the Count returned to his seat, while Bertrand resumed his discourse.

"Ordained the recorder of my own crimes, I feel I must not delay to enter on the

the dreadful task, lest I soon lose the power of explaining what you should know.

" I was in Paris when Garcio arrived there in search of his sisters' seducers, and, by means of a servant, since dead, he succeeded in discovering me. We fought, and I was wounded: Garcio fled to take vengeance on St. Viviers. Ah! he never returned. The confinement which, on my part, followed the duel, saved me from further guilt. Penitence entered my soul, and a full, but agonising conviction of my guilt, led to my reformation. I wrote to St. Viviers, and warned him that I had heard that Elvira had vowed a terrible revenge. Ah! little did I then suppose that I should assist in its completion. I retired into a monastery, that stood in a most remote situation, where I remained for a few years, till having conceived an idea, that were I residing near St. Viviers castle, I might possibly succeed in leading its Lord to repentance, I made interest to remove

to

to one within this vicinity; and soon after I arrived in this convent, I wrote to Bionville, who imagined I was gone abroad, and who had the entire management of all my estates. When this monster came to me, and discovered that I was labouring under all the terrible inflictions of a guilt-stained conscience, and that I wished to establish the legality of my son's birth, and resign my estates to this dear child; he swore, that if I put such an intention into practice, that he would find the means of depriving me of all power of doing so, by taking secure measures for bringing me to justice for the murder of Durancy, and thus effectually punish me, and destroy my proud hopes of leaving a fair name to my posterity. In fine, he declared, that nothing would satisfy him, but being allowed to retain the management of the estates till his death, at which time he would take care that they should be ensured to my son, whom he said he should still rear as an orphan, and who should not learn other-

wise, till the death of his guardian should at once reveal to him his real dignity, and put him into possession of his inheritance. To these terms, the dread of loading my child with infamy, by the publication of his father's crimes, compelled me to assent: yet I have not, in this respect, suffered so severely as I dreaded; for my Valmont has been trained in every virtue. But pardon me, Count; I wander from the subject that I meant to continue to you.—After this arrangement with Bionville, I occasionally saw the Marquis, but he was now too systematically depraved to suffer me to indulge a hope of yet reclaiming him; but as I was well acquainted with many strange peculiarities in his temper and opinions, I ventured to form a little plan for awakening him to some reflection, and which I carried into execution, with the assistance of Jaques, the old porter of the castle; and, as a dreadful penance for my own sin, I condemned myself to assume the habit of Durancy, and steal at midnight

night to the bed of the Marquis. Oh! it was a dreadful penance. Imagine, if you can, my feelings, when arrayed as the man whom my own hands had precipitated into eternity, with a deep wound figured on my breast, and a visor which I had painted from memory, but ah! from the recollection of features so terrifically impressed upon my memory, that the resemblance was most striking! In this guise I one night entered the sleeping-room of the Marquis, by a sliding pannel, which was unknown to him. A night lamp burned in his room. I stood at the foot of the bed, and an involuntary groan I uttered disturbed his restless slumber. Oh! what horror and distraction seized my soul, when, instead of looking upon me, he arose from his bed, and walked hastily across the room, and taking up the lamp from the wide hearth, looked vacantly in the flame, and began to talk in such a manner, as evinced that he was still asleep, and speaking in that insensible state; but the words

he uttered were every one of them daggers to my soul; for in his fantastic wanderings he confessed that Garcio had sought him at the castle, and that they had fought; that the unhappy young man had been most unfairly treated; and that his remains were concealed in the vaults, together with a quantity of jewels, which he had had about him when he entered the castle.—I know not how I survived this blow; but at the moment I was feebly retreating, St. Viviers awoke, and saw me. He shrieked, and mildly pronouncing the name of Durancy, fell lifeless on his bed, while I escaped through the pannel. When I recovered from the shock I had received, I felt some little consolation in the idea, that my figure had considerably alarmed him, and I could not avoid indulging a faint hope, that, by awakening his conscience, I might prepare the way for leading him back from those paths of vice into which I had but too successfully lured him.

"The very first opportunity I could find,

find, I secretly explored the vaults of the castle, and there, alas! I found a fatal confirmation of poor Garcio's fate. But from the moment I had appeared in the apartment of the Marquis, in the guise of Durancy, he became evidently altered, and was never afterwards observed to be so passionate or so gay as he had been, when out of the sight of his lady, whom he certainly treated with a degree of delicacy and propriety which redounded to his credit. Every annual return of Durancy's death, for some years, I now appeared in some part of the castle; but as I always seemed to come from the suite of rooms in which he had been killed, it was soon reported that they were dreadfully haunted, therefore no person would sleep in them, till the Marquis, hoping to crush the report, prepared them for Mademoiselle de Monterci, and she occupied them for a few nights, till Jaques, having informed me that the Marquis had conceived a most violent passion for Mademoiselle, and as I but too

truly feared that no consideration would deter him from indulging it, I now resolved to present myself before the young lady, as the supposed spectre, and warn the lovely artless being to fly from the tyranny of her uncle; for such she supposed him to be. To accomplish my designs, however, it was necessary that I should have an accomplice in the execution of them; and I soon resolved on making old Jaques my agent in this business. Alas! shall I confess, that my coward fears of the Marquis and Bionville induced me to take all these precautions, to conceal my having interfered in the business. To Jaques, on whom I well knew I might implicitly rely, I fully revealed my wishes of serving his dear Count Louis's daughter; and this generous faithful domestic most joyfully agreed to stand forward, in case of discovery, as the ostensible actor in the plan. But as I knew that the old man could not so well execute what I desired to do, as I myself could, I resolved on appointing a meeting

ing with the Count St. Croix after midnight, in an uninhabited and dilapidated part of the castle; and then, under the figure of Durancy, (for I feared to meet him in my own person) warn him instantly to take his Adelaide from St. Viviers.

"I accordingly wrote a note, requesting the Count to meet a secret friend at midnight; and, as he supposed that it was Jaques he was to meet, he hesitated not in promising to keep the appointment. But as I feared that should he be accidentally seen by any of the domestics, whom chance might keep up till a late hour, I directed him to disguise himself in a dress, which he would find in the uninhabited chambers on the North corridor. Alas! this dress had belonged to Durancy; and the one that I wore, when assuming the form of that unfortunate young man, was the exact counterpart, which I had long since procured for my purpose. At half after twelve, after having first visited the apartment of the Marquis, I was to meet the Count, and I

was just going to the appointed spot, when I recollected, that by passing through Mademoiselle Adelaide's room, I might not only arrive much earlier at the part of the castle where I was going, but that the sight of my ghastly figure, should she be awake, might assist in terrifying her from the castle; and being perfectly well acquainted with all the secret openings of the rooms, I entered her apartments, and appeared before your daughter and a young English lady, who, at that time, slept with her. They were busily employed in reading a warning billet, which I had written to the Count. I stole near the bed—my hand was stained red, in imitation of Durancy's blood-dyed fingers. I passed my hand rapidly over the billet, and then glided away; but I had a very narrow escape, from the courageous pursuit of the amiable young Englishwoman. I soon reached the passage, in which the Count was to wait for me. He was more awe-struck than I expected by my figure; and several

several involuntary words, expressive of surprise, which he uttered, evinced, that in me he did not suppose he beheld the secret friend who had appointed to meet him.—To impress his mind more deeply with the idea that I was a supernatural being, I led him through innumerable passages, and up various staircases, till the fancied sound of voices near us terrified me into suddenly resolving on avoiding whoever was approaching, by passing through a room which had a sliding pannel opening into the gallery in which we were. Judge my astonishment, on finding De Valmont the occupier of that room. I fled out another way with precipitation. Soon I heard the young men pursuing my footsteps. My fear of being discovered by my son, to whom I could not explain my motives, gave speed to my flight; but ere I reached a long subterraneous passage, into which the stone-steps I had so hastily descended, led, I was nearly overtaken: still they followed me through the passages, the vaults, and a

dungeon, till at length the dread of being compelled to speak before De Valmont, urging the necessity of instantly concealing myself, I suddenly shrunk into a deep door-way, and, by means of a chemical preparation, which I always carried about me, for the purpose of terrifying any of the servants, should they ever have the courage to follow me, I enveloped myself in flame and smoke, and slipped away unperceived; while the young men, supposing that I had passed through the door, t. undered in vain for admittance at it. At length, wearied with unavailing efforts, they desisted, and retreated. I was not far off. I heard their receding steps, and came forward to watch them depart. I soon discovered that they had missed their way; but I was some time ere I could decide which way they had gone. With what horror did I at last conjecture that they had taken a passage that led directly to the vault where lay the remains of Garcio. I followed, and entered the vault. They had discovered all. I

uttered

uttered a groan of agony, and retreated.—I instantly threw aside my disguise, and returned to my convent, where I fell ill.—Before I recovered, I heard of the intended speedy nuptials of Mademoiselle and the Count. But this I did not see take place, as I was sent on a journey into Gascony, on some business belonging to my convent. I was on my return, when passing through the town of St. Maximin, I heard of the Count St. Croix's distresses from the lips of his treacherous servant; and I too well supposed that he was a victim to the designs of St. Viviers. Concluding from thence that your daughter's situation must be dangerous, I hastened home; and after dispatching the concerns of my journey, set about devising some plans for her relief.—To gain the confidence of the Marquis, by affecting to approve his plans, seemed now my only resource to serve the young lady. This dissimulation was certainly blameable, but it could not be avoided; and I so well succeeded in my artifice, that I was soon

appointed the Marquis St. Viviers' confessor. In this character, Mademoiselle de Monterci first beheld me, and I endeavoured to catch the first opportunity of assuring her of my wishes to serve her. That my son De Valmont had been ardently desirous of releasing Mademoiselle from the power of the Marquis, I well knew; and could he have effected his design without injuring himself, I should have been satisfied with his attempts to that purpose; but such was not the case; and I well knew that I alone had power to serve her effectually: yet oh! at the same time that I desired to save her from impending ruin, I was kept in continual hesitation and dread, by my slavish fears of discovery, and of being exposed to all the rage and vengeance of St. Viviers and Bionville. But while I thus deliberated, a circumstance that had occurred was frequently tempting me to fly from the castle; for Theresa de Dumont, now Madame de Beauvais, had arrived there on a visit to the Marchioness, to whom she

she claimed some distant affinity. I had some years before heard of her leaving the convent in which she had been placed by her brother, and the Marquis had often boasted to me of the success he had met with, in deceiving her respecting his being the seducer of her sister, and had as frequently sworn that I was so much altered, that it would be impossible for her to recollect me, if we should happen to meet in the castle. But notwithstanding all this, I should never have voluntarily ventured into her presence, had I not met her accidentally one morning in the great hall.—She was so little changed, that I instantly knew her; but she addressed me with the air of one who supposes they are speaking to a perfect stranger; and as my coul was rather thrown back, I was now indeed convinced that sorrow had sufficiently altered my features to prevent all possible fear of discovery, and therefore I no longer hesitated to visit at the castle, whenever I had occasion. My conduct in this particular must

must doubtless seem extraordinary; but to confess the truth, I never had felt extreme compunction for the seduction of Theresa, whose levity of manner, and light principles, were so exactly calculated to lead her astray, that I had not found the least difficulty in persuading her to quit with me her father's house. My ideas of Elvira were very dissimilar; for both myself and the Marquis had spared no extent of artifice or expence to delude her. She was proud and malignant; but her ideas of female honour were such as became her sex; and at those very moments when I was aiding St. Viviers to ensnare her, I repeatedly warned him that she was not of a disposition to suffer desertion with patience or resignation.—But to return to my narrative. I still continued to visit at the castle, irresolutely desirous of, and fearing to exert myself on behalf of Mademoiselle de Monterci. One morning, while I was sitting with the Marquis in his cabinet, he mentioned something relative to an attempted

tempted escape of Mademoiselle de Monterci, in which she was to have been aided and accompanied by De Valmont; but having been disappointed in this plan, she was more than ever a prisoner; and the Chevalier de Valmont had been sent by his guardian to join his regiment.

"The situation of my son was at this time most peculiarly distressing to me. He was in love with the young English friend of Mademoiselle de Monterci; and this young lady was also much admired by Bionville. I dared not interfere. The cruel Bionville had never suffered me to reveal myself to my son; and this was not a moment to attempt any thing of the kind. I sighed, and replied not to the account the Marquis gave me of the defeated attempt at escape; but as, in the course of his conversation, he spoke of some singularities to be seen in the ancient subterranean passages through which my son had led the young lady, when attempting to take her from the castle, my curiosity was raised; and

and on the night following I went to explore the subterranean.

" I certainly found much to interest me, in the rude and extremely ancient sculpture which adorned this place; but as I was wandering through this labyrinth of avenues, I suddenly encountered a ghastly female form, clothed in the grey habit of a nun. We suddenly met at the abrupt angle of a passage. I paused, and gazed on the haggard features of this nocturnal wanderer, in terror and amazement, and fancied that she regarded me in return with a look which seemed to imply a knowledge of my countenance. Intuitive apprehension whispered to me it was Elvira. Unconsciously I uttered this aloud. A horrible smile now overspread her pallid countenance, and, in a voice which filled me with dismay, she muttered—' And thou art De Barre! where is my ruined sister?'

" My confusion and horror deprived me of the power of replying. My silence she interpreted into a sense I did not intend—

for

for she immediately added—'She is dead, I suppose; Theresa is then no more; but I accuse you not of her death. I know that my brother took her to a convent of penitents: perhaps she was a penitent! And she is dead. I was long ignorant of the fate of that brother.'

"Scarcely recovered from my dismay, I uttered some incoherences, which confirmed the nun in the idea of her sister's being really dead; and when afterwards I reflected on this point, I did not undeceive her, thinking it of no service to let her know that Theresa had lived a life of unrepentant gaiety. But to return.—Her words respecting the fate of her brother impressed my soul with renewed alarm, and again I sunk into a silence of horror. For some moments we continued gazing on each other. Vacant and wild as must have been my ideas at this moment, I yet perceived the keen penetrating glance of the nun fixed on me; and, after a short pause, she again exclaimed, in excessive agitation,

'And

—'And you, De Barre, what do you here?'

"I scarce need say with what consternation I heard her again pronounce the name she had known me by at Lisbon.—For some minutes, I was too much confounded to be able to reply; but at length I falteringly said, that my motives for visiting the vaults were such as piety and penitence would justify, and hoped that her object was equally pure.

'Oh yes,' she replied, with a ghastly smile,—'What but a justifiable cause could have brought me hither?—Follow me,' she added, 'and I will discover to you my motive for being in these vaults, if indeed you are still a stranger to it.'

"Irresistibly impelled, I followed her steps down several winding passages and long avenues, till we reached the vaults, where I too well knew the remains of Garcio rested. I now almost anticipated her intention; but I was not the less shocked, when she displaced several of the stones, which

which half concealed the mouldered form from view, and, with a look which would have struck the dart of death to the heart of guilt, cried—'Behold the remains of my murdered brother—my generous, noble Garcio—fell he not by the hands of assassins, and did not De Barre aid the horrible deed?'

"Most solemnly I then denied having had any share in that base act, and Elvira seemed to credit my asseverations. Silently she sat down at the feet of the skeleton, and began to weep bitterly. I placed myself beside her, and my tears flowed with her's, evincing at once the sincerity of my repentance, and the excess of my grief.—After a short time, she suddenly turned towards me, and eyeing me with a look which expressed scrutiny and doubt, said—'You are then a penitent. As such is the case, I have nothing to urge against your former conduct. But how is it, that while wearing the holy garb of religion, you suffer the companion

companion of your crimes to continue in the lost state in which he still exists?'

"I replied, that there was nothing on earth that I so ardently desired as the Marquis's conversion and reform.

'Evince the truth of this, by aiding my plans, then,' said the nun.

'I cannot aid the plans that are formed in malice, the end of which is revenge, and perhaps murder. I am informed of your vow, Elvira, and I but too truly fear that you are here only with a design of executing it.'

'Were such the case,' replied the deceitful nun, without hesitation, 'the death of St. Viviers would be but a just revenge. But it is not so; for I am come to awaken him to repentance, and to expire in the presence of the only man whom I have ever loved. I forgive him all; and I now only wish him to know the force and extent of the feelings with which I am at present inspired.'

"There

"There was so much seeming sincerity and sorrow in the manner of Elvira, as she spoke, that I became deeply affected, and, without much reflection, said that I would aid any little plan she might form for the reformation of the Marquis, provided this plan appeared to be innocent."

"An eager and wild joy, which now sparkled in the sunken eyes of Elvira, might, if I had not been fatally blind to her real feelings, convinced me that she secretly meditated deeds of horror; but ah! I did not suspect her; and, on her sacredly vowing that she had nothing blameable in view, I again promised my assistance, and demanded an account of what she wished to do.

"The night was too far spent, she said, to suffer her to enter into details; but that if I would meet her on the following one, she would faithfully reveal to me all her wishes and designs.

"I promised, and we separated. On the next night I was exact to my appointment. I met

I met her in the vault, and in silence she led me to a cell at the end of a long antique passage, and here I found that she had a bed of rushes, an old chair, part of a table, on which stood some wine, provisions, and a lamp. When we had entered, she carefully closed the iron-plated door, saying—'This, you see, is my residence. Here I have been concealed for some time; and I have a friend who supplies me with all that I have occasion for—a poor lad, whom I brought with me from Portugal, and who now is restored to an infirm and helpless old parent, who lives in a hut about ten paces from the walls of the castle, near the ruined chapel, and from a spot near this hut you may descend into a subterranean passage, which leads into these dreary vaults.—In this cell I mean to pass all the remaining days of my life. The ruin of Lisbon, in which I am supposed to have perished, leaves me at liberty to devote my life to solitary prayer and penance; and can I better employ my few remaining years,

than in mingling with my devotions the most strenuous efforts to reclaim the guilty St. Viviers? I can pardon; wherefore, then, should I not seek to serve him? But for my vain credulity, he had not had an opportunity of involving me in ruin, and of destroying my brother—I then was the only proper object of condemnation."

"With these, and similar expressions, the artful nun led me into a fixed belief that she desired only to snatch St. Viviers from perdition. Under this erroneous opinion, I listened with attentive complacency, when she proposed a plan similar to that in which I had long been in the practice—that is, of appearing at midnight in the chamber of the Marquis, as the shade of the murdered Garcio. But as I feared that the visits of two apparently supernatural beings might excite suspicions in the mind of St. Viviers, which might lead to a discovery of the deception, I told her that she had better assume a habit and mask which I would procure for her, and which I was sure would

as

as much affect the Marquis as the shade of Garcio could do. She was now exceedingly curious to learn the story of the person she was to represent; but I was inflexibly silent on the subject, and at length she was forced to submit to my retaining my secret, and to be content with my assurances of fidelity and silence as to herself.

"When we parted, I made her a sincere promise of bringing her the before-mentioned mask and habit on my next visit; but when I returned to my convent, and reflected on the affair, I could not avoid feeling involuntary suspicions of the real designs of Elvira; and trembling at the suggestions of these suspicions, I came to a determination not to suffer her to enter the presence of the Marquis, till I was well assured that she had no sinister views.

"Thus resolved, I went to the cell of Elvira on the following night, and there frankly informing her of my suspicions, and that I deemed every precaution essential, I said that I could not assist her to see the

the Marquis till after she had, by some weeks patient residence in the solitude of her gloomy cell, evinced to me that a really pious zeal for the conversion of St. Viviers was indeed the only motive of her wishing to behold him. Elvira was palpably disappointed; but I perceived not any signs of hidden rage, nor the usual tokens of secret malice, in either her looks or words. She warmly expatiated on my doubts, but at length assented to my proposed trial of her intentions, and promised to remain a penitent inhabitant of the vaults till I should chuse to suffer her to attempt the execution of her little plan. I now promised to furnish her with such conveniencies, as I imagined would render her cell a less uncomfortable habitation, and she accepted these offers with an air of gratitude and resignation, which removed half my doubts as to the sincerity of her being a penitent.

"On the day following, I fulfilled my promise; and, on leaving her, took care to

close the interior bolts of a strong iron grate, which barred the termination of the long subterranean passage that leads from the vaults directly under the castle, to the cell in which she had fixed her abode; a precaution that I thought necessary to keep her to the performance of her promise, of not attempting to enter the castle without my permission.

"Two days after this arrangement, I was deputed by the superior of my convent to take a journey to St. Maximin, on some important affairs relative to our order; and in this journey I discovered the plot which the Marquis had executed against the liberty of the Count St. Croix, who at this period was attacked by hired ruffians, on his road to Toulon, and privately brought back to the castle, to be confined in the turret; but this circumstance, Count de Monterci, you are already acquainted with, I think."

The Count de Monterci, who was all
ı to the relation of the friar, now
bowed

bowed a silent affirmative, and Bertrand proceeded.

"On my return to the castle, I took the very first opportunity of letting St. Viviers know that I was aware that the Count St. Croix was in his power, and, after some slight denials, he at length confessed that I was right. I then expatiated on the imprudence of an act from which such dangerous consequences might result; but St. Viviers, blinded by jealous rage, would not listen to my representations, and swore that St. Croix should continue his prisoner, till Adelaide could be brought to attend to his own most dishonourable passion. You tremble, Count—just indignation at the mention of such base intentions, irritates your feelings: but ah! consider that the unfortunate being who was guilty of this, is now gone to answer for his crimes at a tribunal, from whence there is no appeal." The friar shuddered, and uttering a deep sigh, continued—"Finding that all my representations to induce the Marquis to re-

lease the Count were utterly unavailing, I quitted him, and proceeded to the cell where I had left Elvira. She was gone; nor was there the least trace left of her having ever been there. Dismayed and confounded, by a discovery which seemed to imply that my suspicions of her guilty intentions were well founded, I returned to my convent, and passed the night in reflecting on what could be done to prevent the possibility of her putting any further schemes of malice into practice. But reflection soon convinced me that I was powerless, as I neither knew whither she had retreated, nor how to discover her; and to confess the truth, I suffered no small apprehension, that should I take any measures to find her out, she might, in revenge, expose me as a partner in the murder of her brother, and thus render unavailing all the precautions which I had taken to save myself from infamy, and my son from disgrace and ruin. These fears, I now too well perceive, were both criminal and weak, but they

they swayed me entirely, and induced me, in a degree, to tolerate those scenes of villainy which I should have boldly exposed to punishment. This my conscience loudly told me; and, in order to silence this watchful monitor, I resolved to persist in my plan of saving Adelaide from the schemes of the Marquis, and finally to give liberty to St. Croix, and restore the lovers to each other. But alas! although my intentions were in favour of Adelaide and St. Croix, I had scarcely courage to venture involving myself in any danger to serve them; and I was also tormented by the dread that Elvira had only quitted the castle to appeal to the laws of France against the assassins of her brother; and thus, in daily apprehension of being arrested as an accomplice of the Marquis, I had little inclination at that time to attend to any thing but my own preservation. It may seem singular that I did not acquaint St. Viviers with Elvira's being still in existence, and of what had occurred in the vaults, but I too

much dreaded the impatient irritability of his temper, to indulge any hope that he would proceed with caution and prudence in the affair, as well as that I felt certain that a violent quarrel must ensue, when he should learn that I had concealed her being in the castle, and let her escape in such a manner. Thus still compelled to silence, by my fears, I remained irresolute and perplexed, till an event, which occurred in the deserted apartments of the castle, led Mademoiselle Adelaide to imagine that the Count St. Croix had been murdered, an idea which was created in her mind by her accidental discovery of the disguise in which one of the ruffians, employed by the Marquis, had attacked and wounded the Count, when seizing him near the town of St. Maximin, and a portrait of herself, which had, during his struggles, been torn from his bosom. There was also a dagger there; but, alas! it had lain there from the sad period of Durancy's death.

" This incident threw your lovely daughter

daughter into a severe indisposition, arising from the excessive shock she had received by this supposed discovery of her lover's horrible death; and I was so tortured by my conscience, for permitting the young sufferer to remain ignorant that the Count was really living, that, during her confinement, I used every possible argument with the Marquis to induce him to undeceive her; and now it was that he avowed his intention of claiming for Mademoiselle Adelaide the restoration of the family honours and estates of De Monterci, and exultingly told me that he was in possession of every proof which would be essential to the accomplishment of his views: and these proofs partly consisted of some papers relative to your birth, Count, and were contained in a box of valuables, which had been recovered from the ruins of Don Sebastina de Selva's palace at Lisbon, and had been forwarded from thence to St. Viviers Castle by the French envoy then at Lisbon, at the earnest application of the Marquis, as guardian to the Lady Adelaide. From

these papers, it appeared that you yourself had designs of attempting to recover your dignity and estates, on your return to France; and now the Marquis expressed the utmost astonishment as to what could have induced you to assume the name of St. Viviers during your stay at Lisbon, when it was evident that you purposed making every effort to obtain a revocation of the decree which had deprived you of the power of appearing under your real name and rank in France."

"I am not surprised at the Marquis's amazement at the singularity of my conduct in this point," said De Monterci.—"My motives for re-assuming the name of St. Viviers at Lisbon were, however, simply as follow:—I had, you well know, suddenly and mysteriously quitted St. Viviers Castle, and for more than seventeen years remained concealed from all my early associates, under the appellation of Arrancy. To return to this part of France, and endeavour to prove that I was the son of the banished Count de Monterci, without having

ing been first acknowledged by the Marquis St. Viviers as the person who had so long been supposed to be his brother, I imagined would be absurd, and perhaps subject me to utter disappointment, and the punishment of an impostor. When, therefore, I arrived at Lisbon, I publicly assumed the name of St. Viviers; and, as a preparatory step to my reception as the once supposed brother of the Marquis, I wrote to him, and purchased the Chateau de Cressy, meaning at that lovely spot to celebrate the nuptials of my daughter and the Count St. Croix, to whose family my real name and circumstances had many years back been made known. My daughter, however, was utterly unacquainted with this circumstance, as I did not chuse to inform her of a fact which, should I not succeed in recovering my rights, might only tend to make her miserable. With St. Croix, however, honour demanded that I should be sincere; and it is partly by the private exertions of some of my amiable

young friend's agents that a discovery has been made of the treachery and falsehood of those calumniators of my father; and, as the papers which you mention certainly contain positive proofs of my father's innocence, I am not at all surprised at the Marquis having rejoiced at finding himself in possession of documents which would enable him to prove the descent of my daughter, and, in her right, solicit the restoration of our forfeited estates; yet how mysterious are the ways of Providence! and how certainly does the practice of villainy, at some period or other, recoil upon the deluded beings who choose the dark and crooked paths of treachery, instead of the plain and enlightened road of truth! St. Viviers sought my destruction, when he imposed upon the miserable Elvira a belief that Louis St. Viviers was her destroyer; and my late assumption of that very name eventually led to his own death."

"Most true," replied the friar, deeply sighing.—"Innocence and integrity can indeed

indeed alone ensure us the possession of peace and happiness. Wealth, honour, and renown, cannot silence the appalling voice of a guilty conscience; nor can even all the sophistry of self-love utterly repulse the consciousness which an evil heart frequently feels of its own depravity. But to return to my relation —Distracted by the situation of Mademoiselle de Monterci, and yet too cowardly to hazard encountering the vengeance of the Marquis, by making an open discovery of the Count's treatment, I at length resolved to take the first opportunity of revealing to Adelaide the truth of her lover's situation, to introduce her secretly to his prison, and, if possible, to aid their escape. I had already frequently visited the Count, and had found infinite difficulty to resist his entreaties for liberty. This circumstance, however, I determined to conceal from your daughter, Count, as I did not like the idea of her just reproaches for a conduct so singular. But in vain I now watched to speak to the fair sufferer;

the ardently desired opportunity did not arrive for some time; for I was again deputed to undertake another journey on the same affairs which had before carried me to St. Maximin, where I was now detained by the business I was employed on, for three months; and when I returned, I found that the Marchioness St. Viviers was dead, and Adelaide on the point of accompanying Madame de Beauvais to her chateau in Gascony. Previous to their departure, however, I watched for an interview with the amiable young lady; but she had imbibed suspicions that I had had some share in the death of the Count, and I could not succeed in gaining her confidence; therefore my desire of discovering to her that her lover still lived was disappointed, and she departed from the castle entirely ignorant of the fact.

"About four days after they were gone, I was summoned to the castle by the steward, who, on my arriving, informed me, that for several nights past a frightful figure, which

which often varied its shape, had been seen near the door of the late Marchioness's saloon, that the bell of the castle had tolled strangely at midnight, that the most dismal cries had been heard throughout the castle, and that the Marquis himself, having once heard them, had hurried from the castle at day-break the very next morning. While M. Andre related to me this strange circumstance, a suspicion darted into my mind, that this disturber of the castle was in reality Elvira; and this I determined to ascertain, by speedily repairing to the vault. I did so soon after; and, as I expected to find her in the cell, I suffered a considerable disappointment at her not being there. To watch for the apparition was now my only alternative, and that very night I took my station in the South hall, where I had not remained long ere I perceived a large dark figure rise through the marble pavement, at the foot of a pillar. This singular appearance rather startled me at first; but having instantly assumed

assumed courage to examine what it could be, I called loudly to the figure, which was now gliding across the hall, and, instead of noticing my address, paused not a moment, but hastened towards one of the avenues leading to the great hall. I pursued, and overtook it at the foot of the grand staircase, where suddenly turning, it threw off a ragged bear-skin cloak, and displayed to my astonished eyes a form and features exactly resembling the late Marchioness. I started back in affright, but was quickly restored to courage, by hearing the voice of Elvira, who, removing from her haggard features a waxen mask, which was an inimitable resemblance of the Marchioness, she said—

'You deserve to be undeceived, Father Bertrand; for few could have had the courage to pursue me thus. Are you at length convinced that I intend no mischief? I have been here in this form before the Marquis quitted the castle. I have seen him; yet he still lives. Dare you now be my friend and assistant?'

'Assuredly,

'Assuredly, if this be true,' I replied.

'Follow me then,' she said.

"I followed her back to the great hall. She lifted up a large marble flag at the foot of the pillar, and led me down a narrow flight of stone steps into the vaults, and to another cell about ten paces from the one in which I had first seen her.

"I now expressed much surprise, and told her I had supposed she had quitted the castle. She replied that she had only removed into the other cell; and, on finding that I never came near her, she had unceasingly tried to discover a passage into the castle, as the iron grate effectually prevented her from entering it by the way that I had departed, and that she had at length succeeded in her efforts, and discovered the steps leading up into the South hall. She then told me that she had not been much surprised at my absence, as she had supposed I meant it as a further trial of her patience and sincerity, and that she had at length heard I was gone on a journey.

ney.—'And during your absence,' she added, 'the Marchioness's death, which occurred a few days after I had discovered the secret steps, suggested to me the idea of visiting the castle in her likeness, an attempt in which I did not despair of succeeding, as I had, on the preceding night, entered a room, where hung a large portrait of that lady; and as my memory is excellent, and I can model tolerably in wax, I resolved to make a mask resembling her face. The wax was soon procured, by the lad who attends at the end of the subterranean passage with my provisions; and I succeeded also, by means of a very handsome bribe, to give him courage to toll the great bell of the castle.

'About a week after the Marchioness's death, I made my first essay, and found my way to the chamber of St. Viviers. He saw me, and discovered the resemblance to his lady. I warned him to repent, and to resign Mademoiselle Adelaide to her imprisoned lover.—*Imprisoned,*' she added, emphatically.

emphatically.—'You perceive, father, that I am no stranger to all the secrets of the castle; yes, I warned him that ruin would attend any union with Adelaide. But if I had had any wicked design in view, I could then have executed it.'

"This was true; and, in the hope of saving the Marquis from the commission of any further crime, I now only regretted that his departure from the castle would render my assistance useless. I said so.

'No,' replied Elvira; 'your assistance may still be serviceable; for the Marquis intends to return in a month, to force Mademoiselle Adelaide into an union with himself. I overheard him give directions to that effect to Bionville, on the night previous to his quitting the castle. I would have saved Adelaide, but she has ever with her a monstrous dog, which I feared would have seized and discovered me, if I had ventured near her.'

"After some further discourse, we agreed

agreed to renew every attempt to intimidate the Marquis, and save the lovers, on the return of the party to the castle.

"I must now observe that I was at this period entirely ignorant of the attack Elvira had made on yourself, Count de Monterci, at Lisbon, the Marquis not having informed me of that event; therefore I merely imagined that you had perished in the earthquake; and I now enquired of Elvira how she had learned that the Marquis was the person who, under the assumed name of De Torville, had induced her to leave all for him?

"Agitated and confused, she said that she would, at some future time, let me know how she had made the discovery, and requested that I would not recall to her recollection those terrible events, which never failed to irritate her mind with rage against her seducer. Fearful of exciting the violence of her passions, I desisted from my enquiries on that subject, and turned the conversation, by asking in what manner

manner she had become acquainted with the Count St. Croix's being confined in the turret? In reply to this question, she readily informed me that she had discovered that circumstance in one of her visits to the interior of the castle, and advised me to see and comfort the young Count, expressing at the same time much surprise at my not setting him at liberty, or informing the magistracy of Grenoble of his situation. Alas! I was unable to answer this just question; for I dared not inform Elvira how much I dreaded the Marquis and Bionville, who both could have produced proofs of my guilt in respect to Durancy, without endangering themselves, while I could only have accused them as deluded partners in my crime, without having the power to give any evidence of their criminality beyond my assertions. Confounded and humiliated, I evaded replying directly to Elvira's question, and she did not press the subject, but contented herself with saying that she had little doubt but that the

Marquis

Marquis would soon perceive the folly and danger of his own conduct, and give liberty and happiness to the lovers. In this opinion I acquiesced, without feeling any conviction that I was right; but I was willing to silence the upbraidings of my conscience, by persuading myself that such would yet be the case. During the absence of the Marquis and Mademoiselle de Monterci, the nun conducted herself with much apparent piety and patience, and appeared so entirely devoted to her religious duties in her secluded state, that all my fears were hushed.

"In order to avoid suspicion, as to fraud or design, I made Elvira several times enter the castle, in her disguise, at midnight; and in fact this succeeded to my wish, as it certainly created considerable doubts in the mind of the Marquis, who, although inclined to attribute to artifice the singular mysteries which occurred, was nevertheless extremely puzzled, when he reflected that the same appearances and noises had been seen

seen and heard during his absence, and therefore could not well be supposed to be meant to alarm him only.

"The strange peculiarities of St. Viviers' fickle principles rendered this scheme tolerably successful, and he suffered no small degree of alarm and astonishment at the unaccountable and seemingly supernatural events that happened almost every night in the castle; nay, so much was he distressed by them, that Bionville and the Villettes had no small difficulty in persuading him not to relinquish his designs on your daughter, which he wished to do for awhile, although he was equally desirous of conducting her as Marchioness St. Viviers to Paris."

"Who is that Villette, father?" inquired the Count de Monterci.

"Who he really is, I cannot well inform you, my Lord," replied the friar; "I know only that the Marquis represented him as a private agent of your's, living at Bayonne, and who, it seems, has contrived to produce

duce a will, declared to be made by yourself, Count, and leaving your daughter to the sole guardianship of the Marquis, with an injunction to give her hand to him only, on condition that he should exert himself to recover for her the forfeited estates and honours of her family."

"I trust that these people may be taken," said the Count, much displeased, "as I shall then be able to ascertain whether I have ever before beheld them, and also to punish their daring fraud and forgery. But suffer me to beg that you will, if possible, proceed with your relation, Father Bertrand," added the Count.

"About a week after the Marquis's return," resumed the friar, "I was one day sitting with him in his cabinet, when a letter was brought him, which seemed to almost deprive him of his senses; and this epistle was that which you had written to him, demanding your daughter; for starting up in the wildest dismay, after reading a few lines, he exclaimed—'Destruction!

Monterci alive! Him then it was who would have clandestinely carried off my Adelaide; but she shall be mine.'

"He then, trembling with fury, resumed the perusal of the letter, and became more frantic. I ventured to speak, and to remonstrate on the impossibility of detaining the young lady from her father; but the Marquis flew into a greater rage, and swore that she should be his wife, or that he would resign her but with life. He then requested that I would perform the ceremony; and, to prevent his asking any one else who would undertake the business, I was compelled to give a seeming consent. To redouble the terrors which nightly reigned in the castle, was now all that I could do; and, amid various deceptions, which my knowledge of the weakness of the Marquis's real character induced me to put in practice, I suspended a dagger by a thin wire from the canopy of his bed, and having touched the point of the poniard with a chemical preparation, it appeared

to

to be tipped with flame. This appearance caught his view, on his awaking in the night, and he summoned his servant and Andre to pass the remaining hours of darkness with him; therefore this trick succeeded, even beyond my hopes, in alarming him. But all was insufficient to check his guilty career; and I had the misery of finding that he still persisted in accomplishing his views on Mademoiselle de Monterci. The exigencies of this period gave me courage to address an anonymous letter to you, Count, acquainting you with your daughter's perilous state, and requesting you to hasten to save her; but as this letter was written only a few days prior to your arrival, it is impossible that you should have received it.

"The fulfillment of this duty gave some ease to my mind, and I began to indulge a hope that you would arrive in time to prevent the marriage; and I now determined to conduct your daughter to the prison of her lover, whom I often visited, and had attempted

attempted to console. I need not describe their meeting; you can easily conceive it, Count. But while I had thus restored the lovers the negative felicity of seeing each other in such a situation, I deceived Mademoiselle de Monterci by a feigned account of having been led to the turret by the spectre which was supposed to haunt the castle; and to banish which, I was at that time apparently devoutly employed. And indeed Elvira, by my advice, did not now appear so frequently as she had done, and of course hopes were indulged by the Marquis, his guests, and the household, that the disturbances were indeed over, till a sudden renewal of the supposed ghastly vision's visits again filled the minds of the inhabitants of the castle with revived terrors. The Marquis, however, had removed into another sleeping-room, and, to the infinite displeasure of the nun, he remained undisturbed but by the cries which she had almost nightly uttered at his door.

"It must doubtless appear extremely singular," continued the friar, "that the haughty spirit of Elvira would permit her to descend to practise such a course of superstitious deception and artifice; but when it is recollected that she was capable of the highest degree of perseverance, and that she evidently aimed to strike the vengeful blow at the moment when St. Viviers should triumph in the fancied completion of all his hopes and plans, her conduct is no longer strange or unaccountable. But to return to those innocent sufferers who now looked up to me as their only earthly resource. To the Count I had made a full confession of every incident of my life, and thus accounted for my not daring to espouse his cause publicly; but I faithfully promised to secretly liberate both himself and Adelaide, if indeed such a step could be accomplished, while I was almost surrounded by the Argus spies of Bionville and the Marquis. Acquainted, however, as I was with every private avenue

nue of the castle, I did not despair of ultimately setting the lovers at liberty; but my fears made me lose many opportunities of so doing; till at length, with the assistance of Jaques, I procured guides and a small cart, drawn by mules, to be in waiting to convey the lovers into Savoy; but, on the very day when they would have been set at liberty, a second letter, announcing your speedy approach to the castle, Count de Monterci, disconcerted all my plans; for St. Viviers and his colleagues, enraged and terrified at this circumstance, resolved that Adelaide should that very night be forced into a marriage with the Marquis.

"Alarmed almost to death, and most truly regretting that I had suffered so much time to elapse in cowardly fear and deliberation, I in vain attempted to dissuade the Marquis from his resolves. I spoke of the vengeance which you might take for the ruin of your daughter; but he confounded me when he said—'If I suffer Adelaide to

remain free, I may indeed expect to be sacrificed to the prejudices of her father; but when she is once my wife, he will be compelled to treat me with consideration, for the sake of that daughter.'

"Thus influenced by his own wishes, and the fears of the Villettes, who declared they must be off, and urged him either immediately to force Adelaide to become his wife, or relinquish her for ever, he chose the first alternative, and now demanded that I should unite him to the lovely object of his persecution; adding, that the marriage must take place that very night.

"Dismayed, and scarcely conscious of what I did, I flew to the cell of Elvira, and told her how I was situated, expressing at the same time my extreme anxiety to discover some means of delaying this marriage, as I hoped the speedy arrival of the Count de Monterci would effectually prevent its ever taking place, and that the lovers would then be saved from ruin.

"The artful Elvira seemed rejoiced to learn

learn that the Count was still alive, and so soon expected; nor did she in the least degree betray any former knowledge of him; for having had the address to discover that I was totally ignorant of her attack upon your life at Lisbon, she cautiously avoided dropping the least hint on the subject.

"With looks expressive of concern and anxiety, she now said—'I feel the most earnest wish to serve Adelaide de Monterci; she is most truly amiable, and therefore it is my duty to save her, if possible. Give me the disguise of a monk, and I will perform the marriage ceremony; then let the bride, under a plea of violent indisposition, keep her room. Thus will she escape a legal union, and, in a few days, the Count may arrive, and all be well.'

"Wild and singular as was this proposal of Elvira's, I was compelled to accept it; and having furnished her with a priest's habit, I gave her a little billet of introduction to the Marquis, containing an excuse

for my own non-attendance. This strange plot succeeded. Elvira performed her part to admiration, and real illness confined Adelaide to her chamber. But ah! notwithstanding all these precautions, how nearly was the lovely maid on the brink of ruin! The Marquis, terrified at the idea of your arrival, insisted on her acknowledging his claims, and made the life of St. Croix the condition of her refusal. She distractedly feigned a compliance, from which she would have receded, but was soon compelled to a despairing acquiescence, by St. Viviers' threats that he would still deprive her Henry of life.

"Shocked at the idea of the lovely girl's supposing that her marriage was legal, Elvira insisted upon appearing at the banquet, with the design of generously revealing herself, to save Mademoiselle de Monterci from ruin. I complied, and agreed to assist her appearance with every little chemical illusion in my power to use. You know the rest. This artful deceiver, after supper,

supper, stole from behind the chair of state, in which the Marquis had so strangely placed Adelaide; and perceiving that he had taken a seat beside his supposed bride, and was swallowing repeated goblets of wine, she dropped a subtle poison into his cup; and when he had drank the death-draught, avowed her crime, together with the hidden malice of her heart. You beheld her death," added the friar, his exhausted voice so feeble, as scarce to be heard; "and you know that her act was premeditated; for she confessed that she had already drank of a similar poisoned cup."

The friar now sunk on his bed; and his convulsed sighs alone evinced that he still existed.

A pause of enhorrored feelings ensued.

At length the Count St. Croix, perceiving that the bright sunbeams were penetrating the damask curtains of the room, arose, and whispering De Monterci that they had better proceed to enquire how

Mademoiselle de Monterci had rested, and send some assistance to the miserable friar, to whom having addressed a few consolatory words, which the unhappy object of their compassion was too weak and insensible to hear, they withdrew; and having directed that some medical advice might be instantly procured for the friar, and that, in the meanwhile, every possible attention should be shewn him, they proceeded to the apartments of Adelaide, who was already risen, and most impatiently desirous of seeing her restored father and her Henry.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

THE Count de Monterci and St. Croix now breakfasted with Adelaide, in her dressing-room; and this repast awakened in the bosoms of each of this little party the most afflicting recollections, mingled with emotions of the most grateful joy; for this was the first meal they had partaken together, since the morning of that dreadful event which had separated them in Lisbon.

Soon as the repast was removed, mutual explanations ensued, but they were merely a repetition of what has already been related, and therefore need no comment.

The day was far spent ere these details were concluded; and this now felicitous party were just descending, to partake of a dinner with some of the strangers that had accompanied the Count to the castle, when they were informed that both the Chevalier Bionville and Monsieur Villette had been successfully pursued and taken.

The moment that dinner was concluded, the Count de Monterci and the strangers hastened to the apartment where the prisoners were confined, in order to examine them, leaving Adelaide and St. Croix alone, to enjoy the mutual bliss resulting from an interchange of those fond and artless expressions of that pure and chaste affection which had been their support through so many troubles.

While these amiable lovers were thus happy, the Count de Monterci was conducted to an apartment where the prisoners were confined, and where, to his great surprise, he found the Chevalier Bionville lying stretched on a sofa, and

seemingly in the agonies of death; while Villette, who looked the very image of abject guilt and meanness, was trembling in a corner; but as soon as he perceived the injured Count, he fell on his knees, beseeching for mercy, and promising to discover all he knew, and had been accessary to.

The Count, although extremely struck with the appearance of Bionville, now quieted the fears of Monsieur Villette, by assuring him that forgiveness would be the reward of sincerity; and then turning from him, enquired how the Chevalier had been reduced to such a state? He was informed that a paralytic stroke had seized the left side of the miserable guilty being, just as the police officers were bringing him into the court of the castle, and that he appeared to have entirely lost the power of speech.

The Count compassionately drew near to the sofa; and now the hollow eyes of Bionville were turned on him; those eyes were filled with the tears of heart-rending

remorse; for his looks were wild, imploring, contrite, and enhorrored. One hand only he could feebly raise;—it was now extended towards Heaven, while the dumb lips essayed to move, and call for mercy from that Power whose glorious name they had so awfully profaned. A horror-striking groan was all he could utter; and agonies, tremendous and indescribable, seemed to torture his guilty soul.

De Monterci, shocked and grieved, stood for a few minutes gazing on the wretched being, whose atheistical principles it was evident had been totally overturned, and the full conviction that religion was no fable, had entered his soul just at the awful moment when death was fast approaching, and when he no longer possessed articulation to confess his guilt, or implore for pardon. The good De Monterci, with compassionate earnestness, turned towards the Lieutenant of Police, and requested that a priest might be immediately summoned to attend Bienville,

who

who heard this direction with a look which spoke the most grateful thanks, while his eyes pursued the messenger out of the room, as if supplicating him to be speedy.

The Count de Monterci now leaned over the couch, and consoled the penitent with pious representations of the love and mercy of that Omnipotent Being, whose existence De Bionville had too long denied, till fresh floods of tears evinced at once his repentance and conviction of the truths of that sacred Revelation he had so frequently reviled.

The entrance of a monk belonging to the same convent as Father Bertrand, rendered the pious cares of the Count de Monterci unnecessary, and he accordingly directed that Monsieur Villette should attend him into another apartment, and they withdrew, leaving Bionville to the instructions of the monk.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

MONSIEUR Villette, however, had little more to confess, than that the Chevalier Bionville, with whom he had formerly been acquainted, had called on him at Bayonne, where Villette resided in the practice of the law, and had enquired whether he ever had had any knowledge of the Count, or M. de Arrancy, as he was called, while living retired in Gascony? to which Villette replied, that he had been at the Chateau de Arrancy several times on business, for a person who had commenced a law-suit against M. de Arrancy.

Bionville, on finding that thus far all went

went according to his wishes, revealed to Villette that the Marquis wished to have a will, apparently signed by M. de Arrancy, leaving his daughter solely to the guardianship of the Marquis; and having explained every other particular, ensured the compliance of this despicable votary of avarice and fraud, by a large purse of money, and the most flattering promises of introducing him to the great world.

Villette, elated by all the low pride and folly of upstart pretensions, quickly made the will, and forged the name of the Count so admirably (he being well acquainted with his hand-writing) that no person could have detected the deception; nor was he less successful in those of the witnesses, who, he took care, should be men of high respectability, but lately deceased. His own name was added, of course.

When this precious deed was properly executed, Bionville sent him off with it to St. Vivien Castle, requesting, however, that Villette

Villette would not remain there, but proceed to the Chevalier's chateau, a few leagues from the castle, and make that his home till the return of its master, who could not accompany him into Dauphiny, business calling him into Provence. And at the Chateau de Bionville, Villette became enamoured of the Chevalier's fine shewy housekeeper, who, affecting for this poor would-be gentleman a most violent passion, soon duped him into marrying her, ere the return of the Chevalier, who, when he did return, was compelled, by the importunities of the Villettes, to prevail on the Marquis to admit them as guests at the castle, which at length the latter did, in the hope that they might somehow be instrumental in accomplishing his designs on Adelaide, and enliven the confined society at the castle, by their laughable display of vulgar absurdities.

Scarce had the trembling Villette concluded this account of himself, when a servant came to inform the Count, that his presence

presence was requested by the monk, who was attending Bionville. Instantly De Monterci obeyed this summons, and hastened to the apartment where he had left Bionville and the monk; but ere he entered, the Chevalier expired—an awful example of the folly and wickedness of the atheistical principles which had thrown the veil of human wisdom over his heart, and blinded him to the enlightening rays of divine truth.

"I am then too late," sighed the Count, bending over the breathless corse.

"Too late to receive the supplicating look of a sinner for pardon, my son," replied the monk; "but not too late to experience the satisfaction of hearing that the Chevalier Bionville in heart recanted the atheistical opinions, which it is well known he cherished, ere he departed for that world, of which he more than doubted the reality. I have prayed fervently beside him, and he has received the benefit of those rites which our holy church enjoins

to

to the dying. But although unable to articulate a sentence, yet with support he has contrived to trace a few lines, acknowledging his renunciation of his abominable principles, and in confessing a secret which lay heavy on his mind.

"This paper, Count de Monterci, most particularly concerns the Father Bertrand; and as it is to be delivered to him, may I request that you will condescend to witness my giving it safely into his hands?"

"Most certainly," replied the Count; and then having bestowed one more glance on the pale corse of Bionville, De Monterci led the way to the apartment in which Father Bertrand still lay. This unhappy man received the Count and the monk with indications of humble gratitude for their visit. He heard the account of Bionville's death with every token of sincere joy; but when he commenced the perusal of the paper which the monk presented him, he became most violently agitated, and at length sunk back speechless on the couch,

couch, while, with a feeble hand, he held the paper towards the Count de Monterci, and seemed, by his looks, to beg that that nobleman would read its contents.

The Count understood, and obeyed his wishes; and although the scrawl was scarcely legible, found little difficulty in decyphering the following words:—

"Baron de Esteville, a conviction of the veracity of that holy religion, which, to my most extreme misery, I have too long condemned, now gives my death-struck frame strength in the exertion which I make to address you. I cannot say much. Receive the assurance of a dying penitent, who, imploring your pardon, for a long series of falsehood and fraud, now informs you that the Chevalier de Valmont is not your son, but the stolen child of the Earl of Hallencourt, an English nobleman, who still lives revered and honoured in his native land—but he is childless. Your son died about a year after he was committed to my care; but had I confessed so, I must

have

have resigned part of my usurped power over you, and also the management of your fortune. Among my papers will be found the authentic particulars of this affair. To you I bequeath the remains of my shattered fortune; bestow it in charitable purposes, and take immediate measures to send the documents that you will find relative to your supposed son's real birth to the Earl of Hallencourt. Establish that amiable young man's claims, and receive the reward of your exertions in his favour, by the knowledge that you are innocent of Durancy's death. That deed was committed by Pierre, the Marquis St. Viviers' favourite servant, who, being privately stationed behind you at the door of the anti-room, no sooner beheld you almost overpowered by Durancy, than he stretched his hand over your shoulder, and plunged a poniard into the bosom of the unfortunate Durancy, whom you imagined to have been pierced, by running on your sword. Pierre, you know, is lately dead; but

but his confessor can confirm to you this fact. Once more, I beg, establish the rights of your supposed son, and restore to a virtuous parent a son who is most worthy of his love. I go in the full conviction that there is another world, and that the mercy of Heaven is manifested in my most unfeigned, though late repentance."

When the Count de Monterci had concluded this extraordinary epistle, he turned towards Father Bertrand, and said—"I think, father, there can be no doubt entertained of the truth of these confessions; and while I perceive you regret the loss of your supposed son, I yet congratulate you on having received the consolatory assurance that you are innocent of the deed which has so long lain heavy on your mind."

"Most grateful do I feel for the Count de Monterci's kind consideration," said Bertrand; "and must confess, that the loss of such a being as my supposed son in some degree

degree afflicts me. I am now childless; but my vices have made me so. I ought not, therefore, to repine; and I shall immediately exert myself in establishing the claims of that virtuous young man, whom any parent may rejoice in acknowledging. As to the affair of Durancy, I believe I need not speak on this subject; you can guess my grateful feelings, Count. I have often suspected such to have been the case; but having been repeatedly assured, both by Bionville and the Marquis, that Durancy fell by my hand, and being utterly unable, from the hurry and confusion of my feelings, to decide positively that he was not murdered by me, I have thus long submitted to the imposition practised on my mind; but although I am innocent of being the murderer of Durancy, still I cannot cease to remember, that in my licentious advice to the Marquis, originated the ruin of that hapless couple; nor can I decline that rigid system of penance which I adopted for that deed,

deed, while the reflection lives in my soul, that I was the planner of their destruction. All the horrible events that have recently happened, my vices have in no small degree produced. First, my depravity seduced the Marquis into sin; and when I had opportunities of saving him from the commission of recent crimes, and might have prevented the fatal catastrophes which have now occurred, my slavish fears checked me."

Thus spoke the Father Bertrand; and though freed from all further apprehension of drawing ignominy on the head of an innocent and amiable son, yet he soon evinced to the Count de Monterci that the arrows of remorse and contrition were still fixed in his heart; and he unceasingly declared that every future hour of his life should still be devoted to the continued exercise of the most severe penances.

Before the Count quitted the father, a paper was brought in, and presented to the former. It had been found pinned on the bosom

bosom of the robe of the Nun of Miserecordia, and contained her wild and singular confessions. The Count trembled as he read this frightful record of the most criminal and violent of women.

After calling down Heaven's judgments on her seducer, in a strain of the wildest passion, yet determined malice, she continued—"When I was abandoned—deserted—left to infamy and want—when my child had fallen the sacrifice of my rage, and his father's crimes, I vowed revenge on that cruel father, and flew to the Miserecordia; for my seducer had once told me, that it was predicted that the last heir of his house should fall by the hand of a nun of that order. Irresistibly impressed on my heart was the presentiment that this prediction would be fulfilled. I knew that my seducer was a wanderer; for he had told me that he had quitted his father's castle, and knew not when he should return. Fiercely as burned the fire of vengeance in my breast, I had not the folly to suppose

suppose that I should find my seducer so soon returned to his home, a home where he so well knew I should seek him. I did not therefore go then, but threw myself at the feet of the superior of the Miserecordia, and related my tale with so much seeming artlessness, omitting both the manner of my child's death, and my vow, that she pitied me, and I extorted from her a promise to discover my seducer, and gain me some redress. She wrote to the old Marquis St. Viviers, and related to him my sad story. The old Marquis was dead, but the young one, his eldest son, returned an answer that confirmed the tale that Louis had told me; for the Marquis, with well expressed grief, confessed that his brother possessed the worst heart and most depraved morals; that he himself did not doubt the truth of the superior's relation; but Louis had not yet returned, nor did he know where he had concealed himself; but that, when he did receive that information, he would immediately write, and acquaint

the good superior, whom, however, he could not flatter with any hopes on the subject, as he feared that it was most probable that the depraved and ignobly minded Louis would never return to St. Viviers, but pursue the wandering and nefarious life he had adopted, and which suited best with his low propensities. The new Marquis then concluded with requesting the superior's acceptance of a very large sum in bank bills, which he said was intended as a gift to me and herself.

"This epistle, which seemed penned by the hand of sincerity, confirmed all my revenge, and I resolved to embrace a religious profession, which promised me many hopes of discovering the fugitive and abandoned Louis, as it presented me the power of continually enquiring after him of the strangers, whom the rules of my order would enjoin me to attend.

"Years passed away without my meeting any success in my enquiries; but still the fire of revenge scorched my heart; and I had

had so long accustomed my mind to dwelling with delight on this cherished wish, that I beheld nothing in the idea of accomplishing my revenge but an act of justice. And surely it is so; for still it urges me to punish my seducer as he merits. Here in this cell, hidden in the vaults of his castle, where I lie awaiting the moment when all his present wishes are on the eve of fulfilment, I exult in the certainty, that at that moment the hand of vengeance shall snatch from his lips the cup of delight, and seal his eyes with the stamp of death. But whither am I wandering? wherefore do I thus anticipate the triumph which my heart feels at the thought of my destroyer's ruin? Let me return to my sad tale; yet how shall I attempt to describe the extacy which filled my burning bosom, when at Lisbon I at length discovered Louis St. Viviers! It was on the eve of All Saints, a day ever remembered with bitterness by me; for it was on the eve of that feast that I was deserted, that I sacrificed my child to the guilt of his

father, and swore—swore to pursue that father with all the revenge which injured love, converted into the most deadly hatred, could devise. I flew to the residence of St. Viviers—I learned he had been married, and was a father on the day of my abandonment; he fell by my hand—he generously gave me liberty; but instead of being grateful for this and promised secrecy, I flew to a miserably dilapidated building in the quarter of the Mernolares, in search of a man who was connected with a vile set of desperadoes. This man was also one of those beings on whom I frequently bestowed sums of money, to discover the retreat of St. Viviers; and this the sale of some jewels, I had on when I quitted the villa where I had lived with my seducer, enabled me to do. This agent I now dispatched to lurk near the palace of Don Sebastino de Selvas, and learn whether the Count St. Viviers still lived. But my impatience would not permit me to await his return; I therefore hastened to the

the garden gate, by which I had but an hour before secretly been suffered to escape; and just as I reached it, the first shock of the earthquake, which has almost levelled the proud city of Lisbon with the dust, was felt. In such a moment, does it seem possible that I could entertain any other idea than that of immediate destruction? but it was not so; the long, long cherished desire of revenge had absorbed every other feeling, and I stood amid the general wreck, wild and undaunted. Nor was I so very singular in my feelings.—Others, urged by the avaricious thirst of plunder, and deaf to the voice of humanity, which should have been listened to by those who had no motive to urge them to hate their fellow-beings, had already commenced the barbarous work of pillage, and, with a cruelty more than savage, despoiled the hapless survivors of this awful calamity of what might have been their whole future resources. In this hour of peril, I rushed into the palace of Don Se-

bastino de Selvas; every soul had fled from the falling edifice but the young Adelaide, who, pale, and almost lifeless, reclined by the couch of her father, preferred expiring with him to attempting to save herself by flight, while a beloved parent should perish. As I entered the room, I saw the languid half-closed eyes of the Count, fixed with fearful tenderness on his child. I heard his feeble voice, imploring her to seek refuge, by flying from the tottering building. One momentary pang of compassionate remorse thrilled through my frame: but quick as the forked lightning's dart, the recollection that this barbarous Count had left my child to perish in ruin, re-animated all the fierce frenzy of revenge; and again had I done some deed of horror, had not the man who accompanied me seized the weak Count in his athletic arms, and, strengthened by the impulse of humanity and gratitude, bore him from amid the falling palace. Adelaide followed; but scarcely had they reached the gardens, the only

only way of escaping, when the man met a group of his companions, and, at a word of his, one of the men seized the now fainting Adelaide, and carried her off through the piles of fallen houses. I followed quick upon their footsteps; for much I feared that these men would sell their captives for slaves, if once they escaped the devastation of the day. Ranvirez, the man whom I had sent to the palace, still tottered beneath the weight of the Count's lifeless form, and turned towards me, to assure me of the safety of the young lady. But scarcely, at the most imminent hazard of our lives, had we passed along three streets, as yet but slightly injured, when a stone, falling suddenly from the top of a house, struck me lifeless to the earth.

"On recovering, I found myself in a large vaulted cellar, where my eyes soon distinguished the senseless forms of the Count and his daughter, and several of Ranvirez's companions. I cast a look of enquiry on Ranvirez, who immediately said

—'I have conveyed you all to this cellar, because one of my companions and a small party are gone to secure a little booty, which they have in their eye; and, as soon as night-fall, we shall try to take you on board Pedro's vessel. We are just as safe here as we should be in wandering through the half choaked up streets. If we must die, why we must; and we may as well die here as any where else; and if we outlive all, why we shall be the merrier and richer by this day's work.'

"I turned from this man, shocked and disgusted. He had no cause to hate his fellow-beings: He had no agonizing thirst of vengeance scorching up the feelings of humanity in his breast: He was plundering and adding to the ruin of those who had never injured him. I now insisted on being suffered to quit the vault, but the men would not permit this. The day passed—how, I cannot describe; but at night the smuggler returned to the vault, and directed his men to carry off the Count,

Count, leaving me and Adelaide alone, declaring that they would not venture to take her with them. Alas! she was almost insensible to her situation: but wherefore need I describe the miseries I myself had in part occasioned? No sooner were the men departed, than I began threatening and reviling the innocent Adelaide; but she was soon rescued from my malignant power by her lover. And now I had nearly been deprived of life—an arch of the cellar fell in, and I was buried beneath the ruins. In a few minutes another slight shock released me, almost uninjured, from my perilous situation; and now a sudden fear for my own safety induced me to resolve on attempting to reach the vessel of Pedro de Velasco, the smuggler. I fled from the vault, and almost miraculously reached the spot where the vessel lay. It was in a small creek beyond Belem. In a few minutes I was on board, and they set sail.

"In the cabin I found the Count laid on

a bed, and carefully attended to. A man was dressing his wound, and a pocket-book and several papers lay scattered about. I took up these, and examined them. With what consternation and horror did I discover two, that fully informed me that the victim of my vengeance had no real claims to the name of St. Viviers, and that the Marquis had been my seducer! The paper I first examined was a memorandum of particulars, which it stated had been related to the Count by a servant, who had lived with the seducer of my sister, when we resided in a villa, in which our betrayers had secreted us from the rage of our dishonoured relatives. I will make no comment on my feelings on this discovery.—The second paper was the copy of an appeal, which the Count intended to make to the King of France, for a repeal of a sentence which had been passed against his family, on a charge of treasonable opinions.

"A conviction of my error followed my perusal of these papers; and, enraged to madness,

madness, by the artful dissimulation and perfidy of the Marquis, I renewed my vow of vengeance, and resolved, the moment I landed, to set off for France, and accomplish my revenge. Pedro, Ranvirez, and their companions, I well knew would not be displeased at my departure; for they knew that, for my own sake, I should not betray them; and even they were not depraved enough to think of sacrilegiously detaining a nun. Our voyage continued three days, during which period I paid incessant attention to the unfortunate victim of my mistake, whose astonishing resemblance to my seducer had led me to attempt his life. But although this likeness was extreme, yet, on minute examination, I perceived much difference in the expression of their features. In bitterness I wept the injury I had done the Count, who was now suffering all the horrors of delirious melancholy. But my grief had not the power of softening my heart—no, I was

instigated by my feelings only to a firmer resolve of punishing my real seducer.

"On the evening of the third day, we landed on an obscure part of the Portugueze coast, near the confines of Spain, and the Count was conveyed to a cave, which served as the retreat of the men associated with the smugglers, while I was left at liberty to pursue what course I pleased, but not without every possible offer of assistance, as to placing me in safety. I desired not to involve any one in my troublesome adventures; and, on receiving repeated assurances that the Count should be set at liberty the moment he was sufficiently recovered, I altered my dress, and, in disguise, set off for France, in order to punish the treachery which I still bear written on my heart.

* * * * * * * * * * *

"Well, I have reached the castle:—I have discovered new wonders—wonders which have given tenfold animation to my

resolves:—I have seen the remains of my murdered brother—murdered, no doubt, by my destroyer. I have also seen De Barre, the seducer of Theresa. Poor Theresa! she was impelled to ruin by my example. De Barre! he shall be an instrument of my vengeance."

She then continued to relate her success, in imposing on Father Bertrand, and all the events which had occurred to her in the cell and in the castle, till the night of the banquet, when the scroll was thus continued:—

"This night, then, my revenge will at length be completed. I will not trust again to the uncertain stroke of the poniard. I have prepared a subtle, quick Italian drug. This shall St. Viviers swallow in the sparkling wedding cup. But shall Elvira survive only to die ignominiously? No! St. Viviers, I will partake of this fatal draught, which shall quickly plunge us into worlds unknown."

Here this scroll, scarce legibly written by

by the trembling hand of the vengeful nun, concluded, to the extreme satisfaction of the Count, who had read every line with horror, and now recoiled, in shuddering terror and amazement, from the contemplation of so abandoned a character as this miserable nun formed, by having listened to those demoniac suggestions of malicious revenge, which had not only deprived her of every Christian principle, but had made her one of the most lost and fiend-like spirits that ever imagination could have painted.

Father Bertrand was hardly less affected than the Count, and, with a contrite sigh, mentally acknowledged the goodness of Heaven, in having called him from a state of depravity and guilt, to the life of penitence and prayer so suited to his crime-stained soul.

When the Count had put up the record of Elvira's guilty deeds, the father said—"Count de Monterci, my soul is heavy and afflicted, by listening to the relation of those

those dreadful events, which ever follow the first step we take into the tangled wilderness of sinful pleasures; and I pine to hide my head in the sheltering recesses of my cloister. My presence is, I believe, no longer necessary here—unless you cannot blot my crimes from your memory, and may wish to resign me to infamy, to ruin, by the exposure of my deeds."

"Father Bertrand," said the Count, "you have never materially injured me; nay, you have latterly wished and sought to serve my daughter; you have, in fact, preserved her. I am not ungrateful; I rejoice in the discovery that you have made relative to Durancy's death; and I feel convinced, that whatever share you have had in that sad event, will never be absent from your mind, while your heart feels the purifying influence of sincere repentance. Go, therefore; and be assured that you carry with you my earnest wishes for the health of your soul. But, as I suppose, that, being freed from all possible appre

hension

hension of being criminally arraigned on the affair of Durancy, you will immediately reveal yourself, I will most gladly assist you in arranging every thing relative to your acquainting the real parents of your once supposed son of every particular essential for them to know."

The friar bowed, and gratefully acknowledged the friendly offers of the Count, and then attempted to rise from the couch, with an intention of immediately returning to his convent, but he found himself so weak, that he was obliged to postpone his departure for some time. However, the Count bade him adieu, and left him to recover somewhat of tranquillity in solitude.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

WHEN the Count de Monterei had descended into the great hall, he perceived several of his friends and M. le Brengel, the Marquis's principal steward, going into one of the saloons.

The Count immediately joined the party, and now an investigation of the affairs of the late Marquis St. Viviers ensued.

A very slight examination evinced, that had there been any heirs to inherit the estates of St. Viviers, they would have been effectually disappointed; for the Marquis had entirely disposed of, or mortgaged his whole property. This, however, was not a circumstance

circumstance which could give any uneasiness to the Count de Monterci, to whom the steward now presented some papers which related to the will made by Don Alvarez de Suza, who, it now appeared, had really died of a fever at Rio Janeiro.

That the Marquis should have easily procured possession of these papers, did not seem in the least degree singular, as his character of sole guardian to Adelaide empowered him to make every requisite enquiry into her affairs. The Count, who, circumstanced as he had been, had not had any opportunity of learning whether the generous uncle of his deceased lady still existed or not, now shed a tear of gratitude to his memory; and, as there were proper persons in the castle to take cognizance of the late melancholy events which had occurred, he withdrew till his presence should be required in evidence, and proceeded to the room where he had left Adelaide and St. Croix, to neither of whom, however, he thought proper to reveal any thing of Elvira's

vira's written confession; but after joining with these beloved beings in their grateful rapture to Heaven, he expressed a wish that Adelaide might be soon sufficiently recovered to be able to leave the castle.—The amiable girl had just been persuading her Henry that she was already sufficiently well to undergo the fatigue of travelling, and she now most warmly importuned her father that he would make no delay on her account, as they could travel slowly; and the change of scene, in such society, must of course be the best restoration of her health and spirits. This was true, and the Count assented, and fixed the time of their departure from St. Viviers' gloomy walls for the next day; resolving that Jaques and Marcella should, if they wished it, be permitted to follow them into Gascony, whither the Count de Monterci intended to go, after having visited Paris, and presented himself and his daughter at the feet of the monarch, whose good intentions and pardoning clemency had, by the influence

of

of his friends, been extended to himself, and that principally through the interest which the noble Abbess of Santa Catherina had exerted, from the first moment that she learned that the Count was alive; and as the good lady knew whither the Count had gone, she no sooner received the assurance of the King's gracious intimation, that the imputed errors of the old Count de Monterci should no longer affect the interests and happiness of his descendants, than she dispatched a courier to follow the Count to St. Viviers' Castle with the joyful intelligence. The courier had overtaken the Count at Grenoble; and, on the latter's arriving at the castle, this circumstance would have formed one of the first subjects of mutual gladness between the Count and his daughter, had not the critical and singularly horrible events, which took place in the castle, so fully engaged their attention.

The Count de Monterci had hardly spoken happiness to the hearts of the lovers, than

than a domestic entered, to inform him that Madame de Beauvais had recovered her senses, and was thrown into the utmost distress, by the intrusion of some of the officers, who were questioning her, and threatening to confine her as an accomplice in the death of the Marquis.

The Count, at the entreaty of Adelaide, immediately withdrew, to attend the appeal of Madame de Beauvais, and soon succeeded in proving that she was entirely innocent of every thing relative to the death of St. Viviers.

This unhappy woman, deeply affected by the horrible death of her sister, now implored, that as the Count had already evinced his generosity, by not accusing her as accessary to the injurious treatment of his daughter, that he would have the compassion to send some proper person with her to a convent of penitents, which she named, and the Count immediately assented; recommending, however, that she should

should endeavour to gain admittance at Santa Catherina; but she declared that the order of that convent was not rigid enough for such a being as herself; and therefore persisting in her first design, the Count sent with her in her carriage an elderly friend, who had accompanied him to the castle, and she departed in about an hour for that residence, where, for a long series of years, she faithfully proved that her penitence was most sincere.

Just as Madame de Beauvais was departing, Father Bertrand, pale and feeble, was also leaving the castle. He paused, as he saw the carriage drive out of the court, and then, dashing away a tear, turned towards the Count de Monterci, saying—"During our whole discourse, by an unaccountable lapse of memory, we, Count, have neither of us scarcely mentioned Madame de Beauvais; yet she is that Theresa, the sister of Elvira, whom I seduced; and though I have been continually in her company for several months, she has not recollected me.

me. Does not this fact evince that excess of woe which has so much altered me? and she is gone to the abode of penitence—Oh! that is indeed a cordial drop in my bitter cup, that I dared not hope to find mixed in my draught of sorrow. And she has departed without discovering that I was her seducer—I am thankful to Heaven for that also."

"It is indeed much better for her to be so than otherwise," observed the Count; "for as the knowledge of that circumstance could not afford any relief to her disturbed mind, she had indeed better remain ignorant of it."

"Her estates have been all lost at play to the Marquis; she was ruined; and she came here to aid his schemes, in the hope of obtaining back some of her possessions as a reward," sighed the friar; adding, after a pause, "I shall give a pension to her convent, which will ensure her every proper indulgence, and be a small satisfaction to my own soul."

The

The old man then bowed to the Count, and feebly moved across the court, and departed.

The Count returned to Adelaide and St. Croix, with whom he now found Cæsar receiving caresses from both Jaques and Marcella, who had been with the lovers during his short absence, and had, with the liveliest tokens of grateful joy, accepted the offer of being taken into the protection of the Count de Monterci and their dear young Lord and Lady.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

EARLY on the following day, the Count de Monterci, his daughter, and St. Croix, accompanied by the friends who had attended the former to St. Viviers, quitted the castle, and reaching Grenoble in proper time, dined, and spent the remainder of the day at the elegant residence of the Marquis le Villeneuve, one of the most early and intimate friends of Monterci during his minor years.

On the next day, the amiable little party bade adieu to their friends, and proceeded towards Paris. As the journey was rendered perfectly agreeable, by their making

very short stages, Adelaide supported the fatigue admirably; and when they reached a magnificent hotel, which the Count de Monterci had chosen for his residence, she seemed to have almost recovered her lovely bloom and cheerful spirits, which, however, received many checks, by the remembrance of the past events. However, when after a few days repose, she made her appearance at Court, in all the attractions of youth and extreme beauty, and arrayed in the most graceful and splendid style, she charmed every being who beheld her; while the King, in complimenting the Count de Monterci, politely assured him that he was not indebted to his monarch's good wishes for the possession of any honour or treasure half so estimable and rare as his lovely daughter, whose intended union with the young Count St. Croix his Majesty highly approved.

Soon after this interview, this happy party set off for the Count de Monterci's castle, a noble edifice in the fertile province

of

of Guienne; and here he was received by a numerous tenantry, among whom were many ancient people, who still remembered the munificent kindness of his grandfather, and who rejoiced in the return of his descendant.

The marriage of the Count St. Croix and his Adelaide was now celebrated; and the tenantry indeed experienced that they had most just cause for rejoicing at the sight of a family who delighted in showering every blessing which beneficence can bestow on the heads of the poor.

Soon after the marriage, the Count de Monterci, and the young Count and Countess St. Croix, visited Gascony, and received that welcome which their long-known virtues merited.

The Abbess piously rejoiced in the felicity of her friends, and wept, with Sister Francisco, tears of gratitude for the conversion of Theresa; while Adelaide learned with delight, that the once misguided Nannette was as humble and pious as unfeigned

feigned repentance ever makes its votaries.

Poor M. le Luc, now much recovered, was among the first to welcome his Lord; but he could not help being a little grieved at hearing that the knave Villette had escaped: However, he was consoled, by being employed to look for a neat comfortable cot for Marcella, who was too old to like to stay in the fine residences of either of the Counts, where she could not but feel quite sad at seeing so many brisk and gay about her, while she could be of no use to her dear young lady—so she retired to her cot, to pray for the continuation of her benefactors' happiness, and create the gazing amazement of a rustic circle, by detailing the terrible sights and noises which she had seen and heard at St. Viviers' Castle, and which she declared could not have been produced by any living body, let her dear Lord and Lady suppose what they would.

Jaques, however, still remained near the Count

Count de Monterci, and held the nominal place of porter at Monterci Castle, and was perfectly satisfied that his nephew, the young man who had carried the letters which passed between St. Croix, Adelaide, and Valmont, to and from Grenoble, should fill the active part of the office, provided he never attempted to supercede his uncle in unclosing the gates when any of his benefactors went in or out.

Nor was the faithful Cæsar forgotten; still he was suffered to lay at the feet of his humane mistress, and was ever treated with the kindest care, to the hour when extreme age deprived him of his existence, which occurred a few months after Adelaide's marriage.

Surrounded now by all the charms that love, parental tenderness, and friendship, could bestow, Adelaide experienced increased felicity, in constantly corresponding with her beloved Henrietta. This amiable young Englishwoman was likewise as happily situated as her virtues merited;

for the Earl of Hallencourt had most joyfully received the documents, which proved that the once supposed Chevalier de Valmont was so nearly allied to himself; and being soon perfectly satisfied as to the justice of his long-lost son's claims, his Lordship acknowledged the amiable young man with tears of paternal rapture, and evinced the utmost satisfaction at his union with the lovely Henrietta; while her brother, who was now returned from a long station in the East Indies, and who, of course, had remained quite ignorant of all that had occurred to his sister during his absence, conceived for her Lord all those sentiments of sincere and generous friendship which so well characterises the heart of a British sailor; although we must confess, that the French accent of Lord Ashbrooke (for so was the supposed De Valmont now called) caused Captain Vernor some little vexation now and then.

When the war was concluded, however, he accompanied his sister and her family on

on a visit to the Count and Countess St. Croix, at their castle in Gascony; and although a lapse of many years had taken place, the meeting of these sincerely attached friends fully proved that virtue is not confined solely to any one part of the globe.

Venerated by the good, and feared only by those whose evil hearts, and ill regulated conduct, rendered them incapable of admiring the bright examples which they could not imitate, St. Croix and his Adelaide glided smoothly along the stream of life, revered and loved equally by their children and dependants, and ever distinguished for dispensing around them all those blessings which a benevolent heart, and a liberal hand, can shower on the heads of the afflicted and the indigent.

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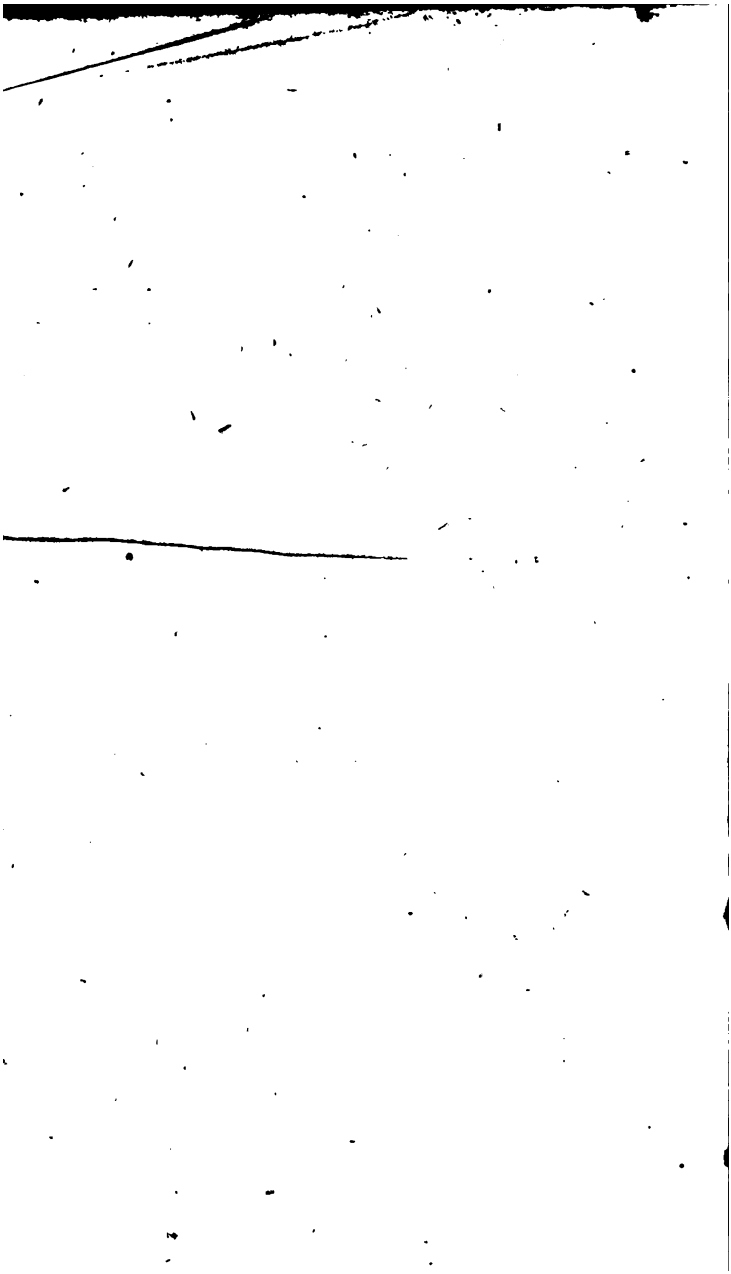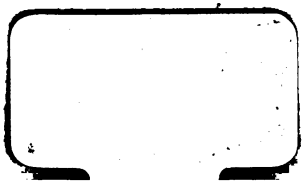
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